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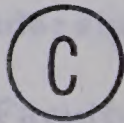
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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

LE TEMPS AND THE RUSSIAN ALLIANCE, 1891-1899

by



Robert John Shalka

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

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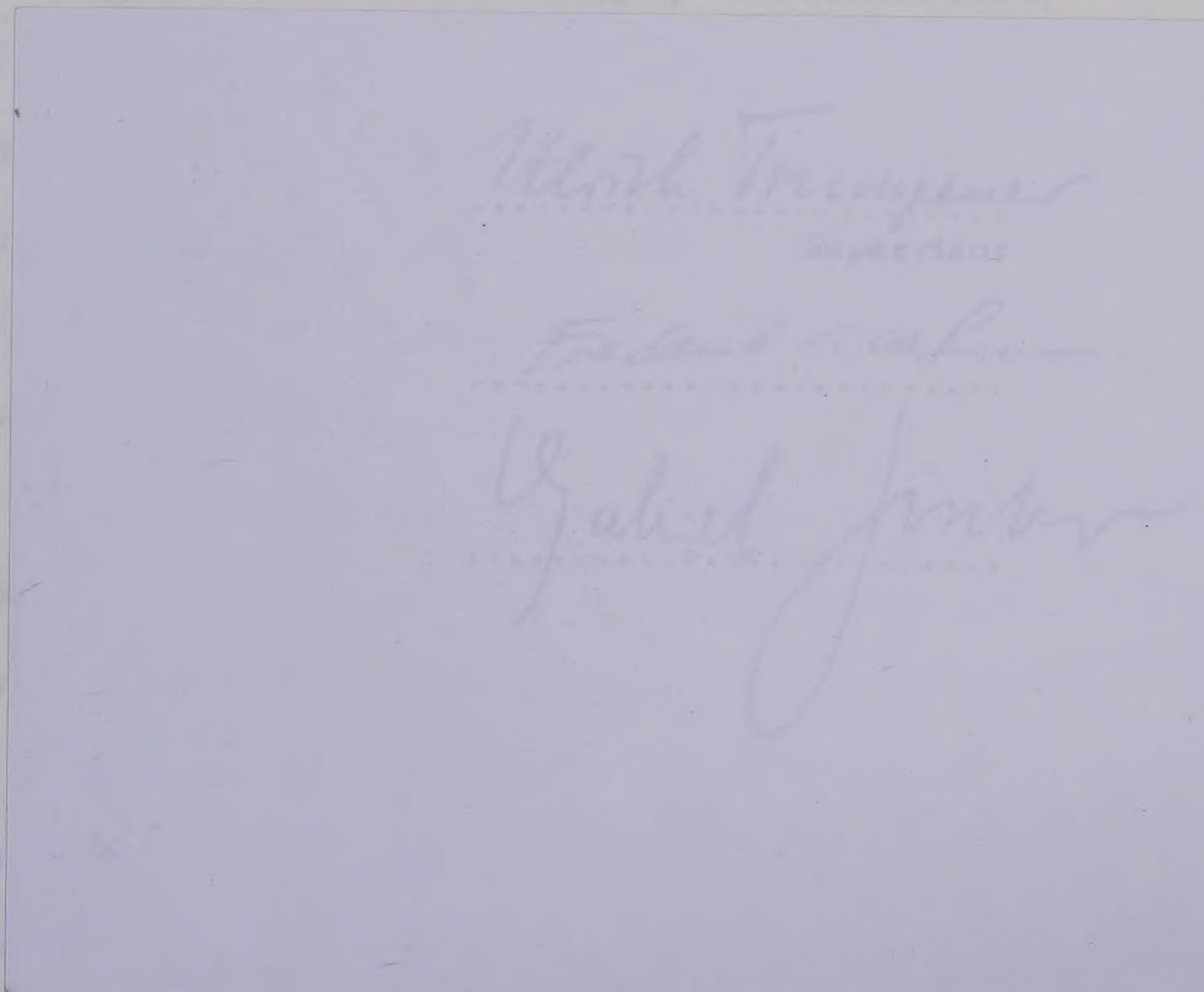
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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled LE TEMPS AND THE RUSSIAN ALLIANCE, 1891-1899. Submitted by ROBERT JOHN SHALKA in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

The object of this thesis is the determination of the editorial attitude of the Parisian daily newspaper Le Temps toward the Franco-Russian Alliance during the years 1891-1899. Le Temps was important as the newspaper read by the ruling elite of the Third Republic. It also held the reputation of being the mouthpiece of the French Government.

It was found that Le Temps was a firm supporter of the entente with Russia, a position which it held consistently from the time of the first great display of Franco-Russian amity at Kronstadt in 1891. The paper took advantage of this and similar displays to hammer out a continuous theme concerning the entente. Le Temps justified its support of the entente on the grounds that it guaranteed peace through the re-establishment of an equilibrium of forces on the European continent. In the estimation of Le Temps, a Franco-Russian entente constituted a check upon the dominant position of the German controlled Triple Alliance. Peace was made more certain by terminating its dependence on the unstable good will of a single power. It was also found that Le Temps was moderate on the subject of revanche. In its view, the entente served as a guarantee of peace rather than as an instrument for attaining the return of Alsace-Lorraine.

Certain difficulties resulted for France as a consequence of

the entente. A major problem was the danger that France might be pressured into a rapprochement with Germany at Russian insistence. Le Temps opposed this. However, the paper did not carry its opposition to the point of exaggeration. Indeed, Le Temps exhibited considerable skill in explaining formally improved Franco-German relations as merely a necessity demanded by international good manners. Le Temps denounced as unnatural the various projects of the decade for a "continental league." In the area of imperial expansion, Le Temps, on the one hand, recognized the indirect value of the entente. On the other hand, the daily had little to say concerning Franco-Russian cooperation for the securing of imperial gains. Such action, in fact, never took place. The sole instances of Franco-Russian cooperation outside Europe were part of the European Concert--Turkey and China. Le Temps favoured the efforts of the Concert as a means of preserving peace. It may be concluded that Le Temps was a firm partisan of the Franco-Russian Alliance, but only as long as it advanced French interests. The interests to which the Alliance applied were basically European in scope --the prevention of a return to France's pre-1891 condition of diplomatic isolation and security from a German invasion. Any deviation was treated with strong reservations.

It was found that the position of Le Temps corresponded to that of the French Government in the broad terms of what alliance with Russia was supposed to accomplish. Like Le Temps, the Paris authorities considered the entente (or later, the alliance) an arrangement for

defence against German attack and the termination of France's diplomatic isolation. Thus, the reputation of Le Temps as the quasi-official voice of the French Government is justified. In addition, the daily fulfilled an important function in creating a reasoned and non-exaggerated framework of thought in which the Franco-Russian Alliance could be viewed by its readers.

PREFACE

The conclusion of the Franco-Russian entente or Alliance, as it was later designated, was one of the key developments of the 1871-1914 period in the foreign relations of the Third Republic. The sealing of arrangements with the Russian Empire for diplomatic and military co-operation in European affairs terminated France's state of diplomatic isolation which had dated from the birth of the Third Republic. As a result, French views now carried greater weight and were worthy of more consideration in international affairs. In addition, the entente enhanced French security from German attack. Increased security also permitted greater emphasis to be directed from the "blue line of the Vosges" to imperial expansion. Contrary to the expectations of ultra-nationalist circles, the French Government did not consider the entente an instrument for the recovery of Alsace-Lorraine.

Considering the importance of the Franco-Russian Alliance, I felt it would be useful to examine the contemporary assessment of the tie with Russia by a study of the editorial attitude of the Third Republic's most prestigious newspaper, the Parisian daily, Le Temps. This newspaper was reputed to be the semi-official organ of the Third Republic. According to Raymond Manévy, a standard authority on the French press, Le Temps occupied an undisputed preeminence among

the ruling elite of the Third Republic.¹ Thus Le Temps enjoyed a peculiar status, described by Carlton J. H. Hayes as a "French national institution."² It is, therefore, my purpose to analyze the attitude of Le Temps, as revealed in its editorials, toward the entente with Russia. The editorial attitude of Le Temps should also indicate whether the newspaper's reputation as the voice of the French Government is justified. This is determined by a comparison of Le Temps' editorials with official governmental policy, as revealed in diplomatic documents. The period selected for discussion is 1891-1899, the years from the formation to the first alteration in the conditions of the Alliance.

Because of the paucity of adequate source material, there are several things which this thesis does not attempt. As such, it is not a study of public opinion. A competent examination of this subject would require some means of determining the impact of the paper upon its readers. The means for such an undertaking are unavailable. Rather, my study assumes that Le Temps held a position of considerable influence and seeks to determine the lines along which this influence was directed on the subject of the Russian Alliance. Furthermore, this thesis cannot attempt to undertake a deep examination of Le Temps' finances and its connections with the Quai d'Orsay. Both

1

Raymond Manévy, La presse de la III^e république (Paris: J. Foret, éditeur, 1955), p. 209.

2

Carlton J. H. Hayes, France, A Nation of Patriots (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930), p. 455.

issues form useful subjects for study, but require access to source materials available only in France. Thus, this thesis concentrates on the attitude of Le Temps toward the alliance with Russia and the accuracy of the paper's reputation.

This thesis is organized chronologically from the Kronstadt Visit (July 1891) to the journey of Foreign Minister Delcassé to Russia (August 1899). A separate chapter (VI) is devoted to Franco-Russian cooperation (or rather, the lack of it) in the imperial sphere. Le Temps' reaction is given to each event of importance in the life of the Alliance. As in most periods, the most important diplomatic transactions were made in strict secrecy. Consequently, commentary on Franco-Russian relations appeared in the pages of Le Temps only in the case of public events -- visits of naval squadrons and heads-of-state, and official announcements by relevant dignitaries. There is no reliable evidence that Le Temps was in possession of special information of arrangements made in secrecy.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Third Republic

France's third, and most enduring, experience with a Republican form of government began in 1870 with the defeat of the Second Empire at the hands of Bismarckian Prussia.¹ From its inception the Republican regime faced numerous enemies, especially on the Right (e. g. Royalists, Nationalists, etc.). The Republic was also prone to scandal and crises--Seize Mai, Wilson, Boulanger, Panama, Dreyfus. Nevertheless, by 1890 the Republic had apparently achieved permanency, if only for the reason that it constituted the regime that "divided Frenchmen least" (Adolphe Thiers).

The Republicans themselves lacked unity on most issues beyond that of Republican solidarity. In Parliament, definite organized

1

The Third Republic is discussed by D. W. Brogan, The Development of Modern France (1870-1939) (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1940), pp. 3-390. A more analytical work is that of David Thompson, Democracy in France Since 1870 (4th ed.; New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 75-163. Guy Chapman's, The Third Republic of France: The First Phase, 1871-1894 (London: Macmillan and Co., 1962) contains much useful introductory material. A major French work on this period is Jacques Chastenet's, Histoire de la Troisième République (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1952-1955), Vols. I-III.

parties based on a precise political programme developed only around 1900. Until then, individual Republican deputies were divided vaguely on general differences of opinion over certain broad issues - clerical or anti-clerical, income tax, etc. They also remained very much the representatives of their respective electorates. Until 1899, the Centre or Opportunists dominated most ministries. Then the Left, or Radicals, became predominant, retaining this position until the First World War. Whatever grouping enjoyed preponderance, the supremacy of the Chamber of Deputies in political affairs demanded that all its elements, except for the extremes of the Legitimist Royalists and the urban proletariat, be taken into consideration in the formation of ministries. Consequently, the pre-1899 Cabinets of the Third Republic were normally based upon the Opportunists with support from either the Left or the Right, depending on the situation. All ministries were coalitions based on the exigencies of temporary issues. Once these fleeting circumstances had passed, the reason for the existence of the coalition ceased and a new ministerial line-up became unavoidable. Although this inherent instability was modified to a certain degree by the carry-over of some members into succeeding ministries, it did tend to have a number of serious effects. It meant that the primary concern of the Chamber was the making and unmaking of cabinets. This in turn meant that little concern was devoted to matters of internal social reform, a condition also fostered by the conservative social views of the Opportunists, who enjoyed the position of the balancing force in all

situations. As far as foreign policy was concerned, frequent ministerial changes left relatively little time for the formulation of long-term policy by the temporary head of the Quai d'Orsay. Notable exceptions did occur -- Ribot, Hanotaux, and Delcassé -- but this tendency to impermanence raised apprehensions among the rulers of a Europe accustomed to persons holding long tenure in the direction of foreign affairs.

Under these conditions, France appeared to the world as a nation of rampant instability. Anti-Republican attacks left the permanency of the regime in doubt. A possible success of these forces was viewed with alarm, for it was feared that France would then embark on a course of chauvinist adventurism, creating a menace to all her neighbors. The divisions among the Republicans and their periodic involvement in scandals at the highest levels resulted in foreign scepticism concerning the ability of the French state to maintain any consistency in its activities. These visible weaknesses had an important impact on French foreign policy up to 1891. France was regarded as somewhat of a pariah, unstable and inconsistent, a theme which was fostered by Bismarck.

Foreign Policy to 1890

France emerged from the defeat of 1870-71 in a condition of diplomatic isolation. The peace imposed by the new German Empire seemed to relegate her to a position of permanent weakness. Alsace-Lorraine was lost to the Reich. The country was burdened with the indignity of military occupation as a guarantee for a heavy indemnity. Under these circumstances, France required a period of peace in which

to undertake the task of reconstruction and recovery. This was achieved with surprising dispatch. The indemnity was paid and the German forces withdrawn by September 1873, eighteen months ahead of schedule. During the same period, the army underwent an extensive programme of reorganization and re-equipment. In a relatively short time, France had proven that she possessed the internal resources necessary to resume her position as a Great Power. Nevertheless, the condition of diplomatic isolation vis-a-vis the rest of Europe remained. This was due partly to French policy, but also, in substantial measure, to the strategy of Otto von Bismarck, the creator of the new Germany and master-mind of the French humiliation of 1870-71.

Relations with Germany formed the basis of French foreign policy in Europe. The key to these lay in the terms of the Treaty of Frankfurt. To the humiliation of the moment was added the permanent scar of the cession of Alsace-Lorraine. The loss of the two provinces constituted the basic element in the phenomenon of revanche, beloved of all good patriots, and formed a permanent block to any attempt at the development of relations between Paris and Berlin beyond the stage of the purely correct. After 1888 periodic efforts were made by Berlin for a rapprochement. These were doomed to failure as long as the outstanding issue between the two Powers remained.

Certain qualifications are, however, necessary regarding the historical significance of the revanche spirit. Revanche never formed part of the definite programme of any French government. Despite the urgings of the super-patriots, successive ministries were

aware that France alone could not face Germany in an attempt to recover the lost provinces. Revanche remained the "sacred ideal in the soul of the nation" rather than an item of specific policy.² In these conditions a tendency developed by which no French politician dared risk admitting publicly that it might be desirable to accept the finality of the decision of 1871. Some were prepared in private to concede this as the prelude to better relations with Germany, but none were willing to jeopardize political careers by publicly admitting this.

With Alsace-Lorraine constituting a permanent barrier to intimate relations, Bismarck was led to view France as his country's chief potential enemy. Bismarck's principal post-1871 aim was the preservation of a peace which he considered necessary to permit the consolidation of the new German Reich. One means of pursuing this aim was to ensure that France would remain in a state of diplomatic isolation. Without an ally, France would be unlikely to risk a war of revanche. Even if she did adopt such a foolhardy course, she would stand no chance against the armed might of Germany. France was kept isolated through an increasingly complex system of alliances which eventually tied all other European Powers to Berlin either directly or indirectly. The initial phase of this policy was marked in 1873 by the League of the Three Emperors joining Germany,

2

George Peabody Gooch, Franco-German Relations, 1871-1914 (New York: Russel and Russel, 1967 [1923], p. 5.

Austria-Hungary, and Russia. In the aftermath of the Balkan Crisis of 1875-78, Austria-Hungary was bound more closely to Berlin by the Dual Alliance of 1879. In 1881 the now-moribund Three Emperors' League was renewed on a firmer basis. Italy joined the Bismarckian bloc in the Triple Alliance of 1882. By the time of its expiry in 1887, the Three Emperors' League proved untenable. Bismarck, nevertheless, was able to preserve the "wire" to St. Petersburg by the complicated expedient of the famous Reinsurance Treaty. In the same year Great Britain became associated with Bismarck's system through the Mediterranean Agreements with Italy and Austria-Hungary. The Bismarckian system was successful in its aim of preserving peace through the isolation of France. However, this imposing edifice, in its entirety, was to last only while Bismarck remained in office.

As a further precaution, Bismarck was prepared to encourage French ambitions in the imperial sphere. The benefits accruing from this tactic were two-fold. French eyes were diverted from "the blue line of the Vosges" to colonial glories. Their pursuit embroiled France in disputes with the colonial ambitions of other Powers. Here again Germany enjoyed considerable benefits. As a result of the French seizure of Tunis in 1881, Italian schemes in the region were permanently thwarted. Relations between Rome and Paris assumed a tone of hostility which lasted for the remainder of the century. France also became involved in numerous colonial disputes with Great Britain. These were further sharpened by the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 and

by continuous rivalry in other parts of Africa.

These benefits to German security tended to be modified by a realization by many in France that colonial activity, however desirable, remained essentially a diversion. Governments devoting a too-exclusive attention to imperial matters were not tolerated. Thus Jules Ferry lost power in 1885 as the result of his support for adventures in Tonkin. Imperialist activity continued, but reached its most aggressive stage only after the metropolitan flank was assumed secured following conclusion of the entente with Russia in 1891. French governments might have been willing to accept German support in colonial ventures, but they risked as a consequence the denunciations of the ultra-nationalist elements such as Charles Maurras. "From [colonial adventures] . . . followed a type of protectorate by Berlin which weighed heavily upon us."³ No French ministry enjoyed sufficient strength to hazard the charge of grovelling before the feet of Germany in the hope of receiving a few colonial crumbs.

Given the state of France's diplomatic isolation it was generally agreed that a European ally was necessary. The choice of prospective allies was effectively reduced to that of Russia alone. Other alternatives were non-existent as long as a joint policy of coolness toward Germany and colonial expansion continued. But while a Franco-Russian alliance might have appeared natural to groups in both countries

³ Charles Maurras, Kiel et Tanger, 1895-1905: La République française devant l'Europe (3rd ed.; Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1921), p. 36.

from a relatively early date, there were many obstacles which delayed its conclusion.

Relations between France and Russia after 1871 were correct but lacking in any great intimacy. Underlying this correctness lay a theme of mutual ideological distrust. Many in France had an antipathy to Czarist despotism. In Russia, abhorrence was widespread toward the turbulent, unstable Republic. The Czar, Alexander III, found the Boulanger Affair particularly distasteful.

In the area of actual policy, common interests between the two Powers were insignificant as long as Russia remained close to Germany. Opinion in France looked upon Russia with gratitude for warning Bismarck against war in 1875. Nevertheless, except for a group of pro-Russian partisans, this did not form a sufficient basis for seeking an alliance. Most ministries during the period preferred to keep matters quiet by not antagonizing Germany through attempting an alliance with Russia. As long as the German attitude remained restrained, Paris was prepared to respond in kind by not taking any great initiatives. This general trend was only temporarily disturbed by the antics of General Boulanger. These did serve to bring once again the menace from Germany into focus, but a more restrained attitude was one which corresponded most to the views of the bulk of the population and politicians. Until 1887 frequent arguments were raised against close ties with Russia. Even as late as 1890, Gabriel Monod, the founder of the Revue historique, writing in an English

periodical stated that "from this alliance France has almost nothing to gain, either in a material or an intellectual sense" ⁴ At a more official level, the President of the Republic was quoted in 1887 as saying that "it would be the greatest error to let ourselves be led into an alliance with the Empire of the Tsars" ⁵

The basis of Russian foreign policy under Alexander III and his foreign minister, N. K. Giers, was the preservation of the empire's security and the maintenance of peace. During this reign Russia pursued a course of non-involvement in European affairs to as great a degree as possible. Ties with Berlin were close, but this was not the indication of a pro-German tendency. Arrangements with Germany were made primarily for the reason that these were believed to be the best means of pursuing Russian aims. Like France, Russia feared diplomatic isolation. Although the preservation of the tie with Berlin proved increasingly difficult with the passage of time, breaking it was contemplated only with the greatest reluctance. When the tie was severed in 1890 through the non-renewal of the Reinsurance Treaty, the initiative came from Germany. Other alternatives were sought only after there appeared to be no hope of continuing the old intimacy with Berlin and the European situation seemed dangerous to a newly isolated Russia.

⁴ Gabriel Monod, "French Affairs," Contemporary Review, LVIII (July, 1890), 32.

⁵ A. Z. Manfred, "Quelle fut la cause de l'Alliance franco-russe?" Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique, I (May, 1959), 152.

Russia's distaste for the Republic was tempered by a feeling that France constituted a European necessity. As early as 1872, Prince Gorchakov, the Czar's Foreign Minister, reportedly stated that "a strong and wise France is exactly what is needed by Europe."⁶ This was borne out in the position adopted during the Franco-German war scare of 1875. Berlin was informed that Russia would not permit France to be crushed a second time. A similar expression of this view came during the war scare of 1887. This, however, was not a sign that Russia sought an alliance. Shortly after the termination of the crisis, Russia renewed her traditional tie with Berlin by means of the Reinsurance Treaty. It may be concluded that the Franco-Russian Alliance seemed inevitable more in retrospect than in the contemporary estimation.

The Press and the Position of Le Temps

As in most countries, the populace of the Third Republic showed little interest in foreign affairs. The political interests of the mass electorate -- peasants, petit bourgeois, and industrial proletarians --- were focused on domestic matters, frequently centred at the most parochial level. This indifference was reflected by the silence of those responsible to the electorate -- Senators and Deputies. This in turn encouraged taciturnity on the part of the governmental executive. Ingrained concepts of the need for secrecy and a belief that open divisions among Republicans in the Chamber might be unpatriotic

⁶ Ibid., p. 155.

furthered the trend to reticence. Thus, a situation developed in which the Minister of Foreign Affairs enjoyed great autonomy in the conduct of his department's business. This independence was limited only by the insecurity of tenure common to all ministries and the risk of repudiation for an overly adventurous policy. Foreign affairs were left in the hands of experts without interference. This situation remained as long as the fundamentals of foreign policy remained unaltered -- aloofness to Germany in European affairs and no moral recognition of the permanency of the loss of Alsace-Lorraine.

Foreign affairs thus played a minor role in the politics of the Republic. They never became major issues in electoral campaigns. For example, the annual Chamber debate on the budget of the Quai d'Orsay usually centred on demands by anti-clericals for the suppression of the embassy at the Vatican. Interpellation, a potent weapon in the hands of Deputies for toppling governments, was rarely applied in relation to foreign affairs. It was sometimes used by a friend of the current Minister to permit a pompous reply or by one of his enemies to create embarrassment. Later efforts by the Socialists to utilize interpellation to clarify the nature of the alliance with Russia were thwarted by the rest of the Chamber. This general indifference to foreign policy was sufficiently marked to allow Delcassé to comment that a speech made by him to the Chamber in January, 1899 was the first survey of French foreign policy given to that body in twenty years.

The absence of discussion of foreign policy by the French

electorate or those responsible to it produced a situation in which the newspaper press became practically the sole vehicle of commentary on international relations available to those interested in the subject. As a result of this situation, considerable influence accrued to the press.

This was indicated by Le Temps on April 5, 1900:

The press, by the news which it immediately divulges, by the manner in which it publicly discusses all basic principles of a question, finally by the dispositions that it engenders or propagates in the nation, with each day . . . becomes increasingly a diplomatic power of the first order.⁷

The power of the press was derived from two techniques: firstly, the repetition of a particular theme, and, secondly, the orientation of news content.⁸

The impact of a single editorial was bound to be limited, but continuous repetition of a particular theme was likely to have an effect on the faithful reader. This was true especially if the paper in question enjoyed a reputation for accuracy and proximity to official sources.

Similar results were achieved by the arrangement of news content in which prominence was given to selected items favourable to the line of the paper. As practically the sole forum for commentary on France's foreign relations, the newspaper press played a role of considerable importance. It was the only source of reliable information available to those individuals or groups interested in international affairs.

⁷In future, references to Le Temps are not cited in footnote form if the edition date appears in the text.

⁸The influence of the press through use of the above techniques is summarized in Pierre Renouvin and Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, Introduction to the History of International Relations, trans. Mary Ilford (London: Pall Mall Press, 1967), pp. 334-338.

The period 1871-1914 was the great era of the French press. Its status from 1870 on was one of progressively greater freedom from restraint. The press code of 1881 entailed the removal of nearly all formal restrictions beyond the official registration of titles. Some new curbs were imposed as a result of the pressure of events, the most important being associated with the lois scélérates of 1893-94 aimed at the suppression of anarchism. However, these affected only a few newspapers and were of a purely temporary nature in response to a state of panic. Greater freedom was one of the major reasons for the rapid expansion experienced by the press. Moreover, increasing urbanisation resulted in a large, readily accessible group of readers. Technical improvements made mass circulation feasible. Universal male suffrage, compulsory primary education with the corresponding development of mass literacy, and patriotism encouraged by colonial campaigns were also of significance. The struggles attending the consolidation of the Republic stirred up great interest to the advantage of the press. Prior to the appearance of radio, the press constituted the major element of mass media. As a consequence, the number of newspapers in France increased from 3,800 in 1882 to 6,000 a decade later.⁹

By virtue of its proximity to the centre of public affairs and sources of information, the Parisian press came to enjoy predominance at an early date. Only a few provincial papers had any prominence

⁹Manévy, op. cit., p. 9.

beyond a local level. During the period under discussion, about fifty significant political dailies made their appearance in the capital at any one time.¹⁰ These expressed an extremely broad range of opinion, extending from L'Action française on the extreme Right to La Bataille syndicaliste on the Left. The majority aimed at a mass readership and were, as an inducement to this end, modest in cost -- ranging from one to five centimes. The major exceptions to this rule were a small number of prestigious papers catering to the leisured classes. One of the outstanding examples was the bourgeois political daily Le Temps .

Despite its formal freedom from most forms of government restraint, the press in the Third Republic was, nevertheless, subject to certain outside influences. One of these pressures was the product of the close relationship between politics and journalism. The majority of prominent politicians frequently engaged in writing for the press -- Georges Clemenceau for L'Aurore and André Tardieu for Le Temps being the best known examples. The interchange between the Chamber and the editorial office was continuous. More direct influences available to the government are difficult to determine, but it is certain they existed. For example, the Quai d'Orsay had a press bureau whose activities have never been made clear.¹¹ The Panama Scandal revealed

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 15.

¹¹ E. Malcolm Carroll, French Public Opinion and Foreign Affairs, 1870-1914 (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1964 [1931]), p. 11.

journalism's susceptibility to bribery. Further confirmation appeared after 1917 through the publication of documents revealing systematic bribery of the press by the Russian Government from at least 1904. Nearly all Paris dailies, including Le Temps, were involved. The Russian influence-peddling was undertaken with the full knowledge of the French authorities.¹² Use was also made of more subtle methods. Semi-official communications frequently were issued to selected newspapers or the Havas Agency, the country's major news agency. This expedient proved most useful in the event that the communication was not well received. It then became an easy matter for any official involvement to be denied. Nevertheless, it remained true that the government did not enjoy the exclusive services of an official organ. There was never any parallel to the Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, a paper generally acknowledged as the authorized voice of the German Foreign Office. The absence of such a parallel was offset by a tacit understanding that certain newspapers enjoyed government confidence.

It was through this understanding that the prestigious Paris daily Le Temps enjoyed a unique position as the reputed quasi-official organ of the Third Republic, particularly within the sphere of foreign affairs. The newspaper had been founded in 1861 as a moderate republican opponent of the government. After the fall of the Second Empire Le Temps came under new management and quickly gained a

¹² Manévy, op. cit., p. 11.

reputation as the quasi-official organ of the Republic. The most prominent member of the paper's management was Adrien Hébrard, an individual whose public career was tied up almost exclusively with Le Temps. As managing editor and director from 1866 to 1914, Hébrard enjoyed complete control over the daily's editorial policy. His tenure saw the setting of the daily's sanctimonious and restrained tone. According to Emile Zola, writing in 1877: "Le Temps is noteworthy for its professorial tone, its pedantic manner of expressing even the most simple ideas, and its obstinate habit of never smiling."¹³ Hébrard succeeded in his aim of establishing Le Temps in a position of unrivaled prestige.¹⁴

By all counts Le Temps cannot be considered a typical Paris daily. From its origins, the paper sought quality rather than quantity in its readers. It was eminently respectable, directed at a restricted and select reading group. With no appeal to the general public, there was no need to abandon its high cost in comparison to its contemporaries (15 centimes). Its circulation, 70,000 by 1914, was small in relation to its rivals.¹⁵ This, nevertheless, could not be counted as an assessment of its influence. Le Temps directed its appeal to the

¹³ Cited in Charles Ledré, Histoire de la Presse (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1958), p. 292.

¹⁴ No biographical account of Adrien Hébrard exists. On the subject of finances, it appears Le Temps was under the control of the Hébrard family and Alsacian business interests until the 1920's. See René de Livois, Histoire de la Presse française (Lausanne: Editions Spes, 1965), Vol. II, p. 446.

¹⁵ Manévy, op. cit., p. 132.

ruling elite of the Third Republic — those who enjoyed positions of eminence in France's foreign and domestic affairs, and who directed the country's major business enterprises. This elite tended to have a much greater interest in foreign affairs than the mass electorate. Le Temps devoted much of its space to this subject. The status of Le Temps was recognized abroad, where it held a position of great prestige among the upper classes. It is indicative that Le Temps was a paper normally distributed at breakfast in the great Continental watering-places of the era.

In accord with its reputation, the paper generally gave its support to the government of the day. On occasion, however, Le Temps tended to be critical, especially if the current ministry depended heavily upon the Radicals. The tone of the criticism differed from other papers in that a courteous tone was always maintained which never degenerated into attacks on the personal plane. Its general orientation was Republican and socially conservative. Socialism and anarchism were condemned in numerous articles. The virtues of patriotism were emphasized but never to the point of chauvinism. Le Temps extended its support to French imperialist expansion. Neutrality was maintained regarding the clerical issue. During the Dreyfus Affair, Le Temps remained neutral until the suicide of Major Henry (13 August, 1898), after which it adopted the Dreyfusard position. On the general question of foreign policy, it held a consistent line of moderation and of support for the concept of a European balance of power.

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The continued repetition of these themes undoubtedly had a considerable impact upon its readers. It may be concluded that Le Temps exhibited a marked contrast with the majority of its vitriolic contemporaries. Its status and reputation as the apologist of the regime and elite remained unassailed throughout much of the Third Republic.

This study is concerned with Le Temps' stand on foreign affairs. Within the area of French international relations, the conclusion of the entente with Russia in 1891 marked a major change in the Republic's European policy. It established the basic trend of policy until 1917. Therefore, it appeared to the author of this thesis that a determination of the editorial attitude of one of the Republic's most prestigious newspapers toward the relationship with Russia would be of value for a number of reasons. Firstly, Le Temps' editorial attitude would serve as an indication of how the entente with Russia was justified and its value presented to the French elite. In the second place, it should be possible to reach a conclusion concerning the accuracy of Le Temps' reputation as the quasi-official organ of the Republican regime. That is, how close was the paper's editorial position to government policy? In short, the purpose of this thesis is to discern the picture of the Russian entente given to the reader of Le Temps. In addition, it seeks to establish whether this was the picture as it appeared to the government or the picture which the government wanted to appear. The period of the Russian Alliance examined in this thesis is that from 1891 to 1899 -- from the completion of a rapprochement, through its accept-

ance as a full-fledged alliance, to its first major alteration.

CHAPTER II

THE FORMATIVE PERIOD OF THE ALLIANCE (1890 - 1894)

The basis for a Franco-Russian rapprochement dated from prior to 1890. Propaganda for an alliance with Russia may be traced from the late 1870's.¹ In France elements of the revanchard persuasion were inclined to favour an alliance with the Czarist Empire as a necessary pre-condition for the recovery of Alsace-Lorraine. Russian proponents of an alliance were drawn from Pan-Slav groups hostile to connections with Germany. Their agitation became prominent after 1886. A difficulty of serious proportions arose from the differing objectives of the French and Russian groups. The Russians had little or no interest in the revanchard aims regarding Alsace-Lorraine. The French had a similar lack of interest in Pan-Slav ambitions in the Balkans. This divergency was never solved to the satisfaction of both parties.

Generally speaking, until the late 1880's, propaganda for a Russian alliance encountered an unreceptive French government and public. Most Frenchmen were prepared to accept the value of an

¹ Carroll, op. cit., pp. 137-138.

alliance as an indefinite proposition but not as an immediate objective of policy. Le Temps reflected this position by warning, on March 1, 1887, that Russia would "abandon France if she attempted any adventures," a reminder to the revanchists that France could expect little aid in a war for the recovery of the lost territories. The same idea was repeated on August 28, 1887: "Russia has her own policy in which we should not participate." Nearly a year later (6 July, 1888), Le Temps asserted that a close association between the two countries so dissimilar in institutions was impossible. As will be seen, this view would change within a few years. In fact, the general trend of opinion seems to have changed by the summer of 1887 toward acceptance of an alliance with Russia at the earliest opportune moment. This change was the result of a belief, fostered by much of the press, including Le Temps, that Russian aid had restrained Germany during the war scare of 1887.²

The growing financial tie between Russia and France formed another basis for a future rapprochement. The first sizable Russian loan was floated on the Paris bourse in December 1888. This and subsequent loans enjoyed a stupendous success, as was witnessed by the figures of investment. In 1888 French investors held 1.4 billion francs in Russian bonds. By 1895 this amount had jumped to 10.6

²
Ibid., p. 141.

billion francs.³ The progress of these loans derived from the desire on the part of the French government to secure political advantages from the opening of the French money market to the Russians. Nevertheless, while the Czar and his counsellors recognized the value of French financial resources, they were reluctant to form a close political tie with the Republic for these reasons alone.

A further basis for a Franco-Russian rapprochement was established after January 1889 with the improvement in the stability of the Republic following the rapid demise of General Boulanger. The Republic had demonstrated that it could be firm against at least some of its enemies. An additional boost of the regime came as a result of the elections of September 1889, in which a majority of moderate Republicans was returned to the Chamber. This was regarded as a triumph for the Republic. This victory signified a greater governmental stability which lasted until the outbreak of the next crisis in late 1892. During this period of calm, foreign confidence was restored in the Republic. An inducement was now required to further improve the development of Franco-Russian relations.

The forced resignation of the German Chancellor, Bismarck, on March 18, 1890 created the opportunity necessary for the transformation of improved Franco-Russian relations into a definite

³ René Girault, "Sur quelques aspects financiers de l'Alliance franco-russe," Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine, VIII (1961). 67. Advertisements for Russian public and private bonds frequently appeared in the pages of Le Temps.

rapprochement. Bismarck's fall was quickly followed by a breach in his alliance system. Despite Russian readiness, Germany's new rulers refused to consider renewal of the Reinsurance Treaty upon its expiry in June 1890. As a result, Russia found herself in a state of diplomatic isolation. This condition appeared particularly frightening in view of a seeming increase in Anglo-German intimacy. Reluctantly, Russia moved closer to France, the only other Great Power not tied to the German system. For example, the Deputy Chief of the French General Staff, Boisdeffre, was the only foreigner, apart from the German emperor, invited at Russian military manoeuvres held at Narva in August 1890. During the summer of 1891, the renewal of the Triple Alliance and closer Anglo-German relations made Russia and France appear more isolated than ever. As a result, the Russian leaders finally decided to take the initiative in further tightening relations with France, the first concrete step toward the conclusion of the entente of August 1891. In addition, the appearance of the French fleet at Kronstadt produced a reaction favouring the trend toward closer Franco-Russian relations.⁴

The Kronstadt Visit: July 1891

The arrival of a French naval squadron at Kronstadt, the major

⁴ The course of diplomatic developments in the Franco-Russian rapprochement is well known. See Baron Boris Nolde, L'Alliance franco-russe: Les origines du système d'avant-guerre (Paris: Librairie Droz, 1936). A more recent account is Constantin de Grunwald, Les Alliances franco-russe: Neuf siècles des malentendus (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1965). The existence and non-renewal of the Reinsurance Treaty were unknown at the time to both the French government and public.

Russian naval port on the Baltic, on July 23, 1891 was the first public indication of the rapprochement between the two Powers. Although naval visits were a common enough act of international courtesy, it became quickly apparent both in France and elsewhere that the Kronstadt visit had a different character. According to Le Temps of August 28, 1891:

. . . having taken the solidarity of their interests definitely into account, France and Russia have been mutually obliged to give each other a striking proof of it which could in some way serve for the notification of the entire world.

The impression was carefully nurtured by the daily that the Kronstadt visit was one of the great diplomatic coups of the post-1870 era.

The Kronstadt visit was to be followed by other similar displays of Franco-Russian solidarity -- the Toulon visit of 1893, the Czar's French tour of 1896, and President Faure's Russian journey of 1897. These spectacles were to be used by the press as the principal opportunities for general public discussion of the French relationship with Russia. The details of these displays were given exhaustive coverage by the press and were supplemented by numerous editorials relating to the alliance on a theoretical level.

The origins of the Kronstadt visit dated from the summer of 1890. At this time plans had been made for sending a French naval squadron to the Baltic on a friendship visit. However, nothing concrete emerged from the project because of Russian hesitancy. The topic was raised once more in the spring of 1891. It was eventually decided that a French squadron would cruise the Baltic during July and August.

On their voyage to Kronstadt, the French ships first called at Copenhagen and Stockholm. Their excellent reception was indicated

by Le Temps (7 July, 1891) in reference to the festivities in the Danish capital. "The enthusiasm was extraordinary. None of those who assisted at this celebration will ever forget it." Official agents also took note of the acclaim with which the ships were received.⁵ The successes of the squadron's voyage were thus not restricted to Kronstadt alone.

Reports of the Russian preparations being made for the reception of the ships varied. The Chargé d'affaires in St. Petersburg, writing on July 8, was quite enthusiastic.

On all sides one witnesses a great satisfaction in seeing the French flag appear in waters where it has not appeared for such a long time⁶

Paul de Laboulaye, the ambassador, was, on the other hand, somewhat apprehensive.⁷ On the eve of the squadron's arrival at Kronstadt, he warned that its reception might not be as warm as elsewhere on the cruise. The Russian people, he stated, were favourable toward France but were not accustomed to extravagant displays of public acclaim. Laboulaye, however, concluded that an enthusiastic reception by the populace would signify the support of the Russian Government. In this event, France would have attained a great coup. In point of fact, the ambassador's fears proved groundless.

⁵ France, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères. Documents diplomatiques français, 1871-1914, 1re série, VIII (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1938), no. 418. Hereafter cited as DDF.

⁶ DDF, VIII, no. 414.

⁷ DDF, VIII, no. 437.

The French ships arrived at Kronstadt on July 23, 1891.

Until their departure on August 4, all eyes in France were turned toward the celebrations in the North. Coverage by the French press was extensive, a factor which may have assisted in the creation of a tone of enthusiasm in both countries. All authorities regarded the official and unofficial welcome accorded to the French sailors as remarkable. The popular acclaim in St. Petersburg was such that the Prefect of the city, unfamiliar with such displays, feared for a brief moment that the revolution had broken out.⁸ Laboulaye, writing on July 26, admitted that his earlier fears had been without foundation. Soon afterward, referring to a civic reception given to the ships' companies, the ambassador stated that "the demonstration which has taken place indicates, more than any other, that French and Russian hearts beat in unison."⁹ The French commander of the naval squadron indicated that the Russian reception was warmer than that at either Copenhagen or Stockholm.

The activities during the visit were normal for such an occasion -- receptions, banquets, reviews, and official visits. A highpoint of the affair supposedly came during the official visit of Alexander III to the French squadron. In the course of the ceremonies, the national anthems of both countries were played. Thus the Czar was present at the playing of the Marseillaise, a composition

⁸Emile Flourens, Alexandre III, sa Vie, son Oeuvre (Paris: E. Dentu, éditeur, 1894), p. 323.

⁹DDF, VIII, no. 442, 450.

banned throughout the Empire. These circumstances developed into something of a legend, in which great importance was attached to the image of the Czar standing bareheaded on the quarterdeck of the MARENGO while listening to the strains of the revolutionary hymn.

Thus the French historian, A. Debidour, claimed that:

. . . this homage publicly rendered to our Republic did more than ten treaties to persuade our nation that the Russian alliance had been concluded and that it was indissoluble.¹⁰

This affair became deeply embedded in the mythology of the Franco-Russian Alliance.

It is interesting to note that Le Temps in its reports did not attach any great importance to the Czar's actions in relation to the playing of the Marseillaise. Only in response to cynical comments emanating from the foreign press did it make a statement on the subject, to the effect that there was nothing astonishing in the playing of the national anthems of two sovereign Powers. The statements made by Le Temps reflected its cautious stand. Its directors were probably intent on preventing the excitement of passions by dwelling overly long on any conjectured importance regarding the subject. For this very reason, several editorials took great pains to dismiss the notion of the excitability of the French population as utterly inaccurate. Le Temps devoted considerable space to presenting France as a solid and sober nation, fully responsible and reliable in the pursuit of a course of peace.

¹⁰ A. Debidour, Histoire diplomatique de l'Europe depuis le congrès de Berlin jusqu'à nos jours (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1919), Vol. I, p. 171.

The Significance of Kronstadt

Le Temps, like most French papers, devoted extensive space to coverage of the Kronstadt visit. Each day a special column reported the full details of the squadron's activities. In addition, numerous editorials expounded upon the general significance of this great public sign of the Franco-Russian rapprochement.

The paper began its assessment of the newly evident entente on a cautious note, pointing out that there was no certainty of any formal political arrangement existing between the two countries. According to an editorial on July 25, 1891, two prevailing views had appeared to date concerning the import of the visit. The first view was the most extreme, for it assumed that a formal alliance had been practically concluded between France and Russia. The second position implied that no particular importance could be attached to the visit and dismissed it as "une pure ambassade romanesque." Neither view was accepted by Le Temps. In its opinion:

Contemporary history [and] the present state of Europe indicate [the significance of the visit] clearly to those who wish to hear it Between France and Russia there is not any binding arrangement, any signed alliance

To this note of caution the paper added that Russia's traditional policy was one of following her own exclusive interests. If, since 1878, Russia had displayed an occasional tendency to favour France, it was because:

. . . [France] represents, even in peace . . . a considerable contribution to the balancing of the alliance of the Central Powers

Under the circumstances, it was concluded that:

The constellation which had thus been formed in Europe pushed the two powers [France and Russia] into a tacit entente, unwritten, but real.

The Franco-Russian tie, an eminently desirable development, was the product of mutual self-interest.

Although Le Temps later adopted a tone of increased enthusiasm, its cautious moderation served as a useful antidote to the fulsome exaggerations current in some of the more popular sheets. Le Temps could refer on occasion in glowing terms to such matters as the bonds of sympathy between the French and Russian peoples which had been made manifest by the sojourn of the French fleet in Russian waters. But, the paper really based its favourable assessment of the entente on the belief that France's best interests were served by association with Russia. This, rather than mutual admiration, formed the core of the daily's case. In addition, it never speculated about the existence of a formal agreement.

In its evaluation of the importance of the Kronstadt visit, Le Temps chose to stress several themes concerning the changed position of France in Europe and the world. Of greatest significance, France's long-standing status of diplomatic isolation in Europe had been terminated and the equilibrium of the continent, disturbed by the Bismarckian system, had been restored. Le Temps (30 September, 1891) reminded its readers that such a development was in no way new.

The morning after the day in which a great political injustice strikes the French nation, the idea of a counter-weight to the

hegemony of a single power imposes itself Germany and the other powers of the Triple Alliance know that this grouping of [France and Russia] is neither new nor disquieting.

The old principle of resistance to continental domination by one Power was once more making its appearance in the entente between the two isolated nations.

Le Temps, on August 1, 1891, also argued that the new combination was superior to its rival.

It is most evident today that it is as strong and, in any case, much more sincere than the Triple Alliance to which it responds: it has this superiority over the latter by not having any need to be inscribed in protocols and sanctioned by signatures. That is the fate of artificial and, by consequence, ephemeral combinations, to which States unsure of the future are reduced.

It was necessary for the paper to make a case for the superiority of ties, such as those between France and Russia, based on vague understandings over the certain ties of a formal alliance. This vagueness was to be a persistent characteristic of the Franco-Russian entente. Formal arrangements -- the political agreement of August, 1891 and the military convention of December 1893 -- were kept in the strictest secrecy. Not until 1895 did the French government dare use the word "alliance" in publicly describing the relationship with Russia. For their part, the Russians did not use the word officially until 1897. In the absence of any certain knowledge of a formal political or military agreement, it was natural that Le Temps should describe friendship with Russia as so strong that formal alliances were unnecessary.

Another theme developed by the paper was the increase in French security resulting from the end of isolation. This point was

clearly made on September 29:

The assistance of Russia gives us equality of active forces and superiority in reserves. Germany has nothing to gain by making war

The added strength of Russian forces served as a greater deterrent against a German attack.

As a final theme, Le Temps took the position that the entente opened the door for a greater French role in European affairs. With the support of Russia, France no longer had to conduct her business on the continent alone, with scant chance of fulfillment when faced with the opposition of Berlin. "At this time, the era of monologues has passed, that of dialogues has begun again" the paper stated on September 13. In addition, France no longer found it necessary to depend upon the good will or intentions of Germany, a condition which was considered highly undependable. France had now gained a free hand in pursuing her legitimate aims, both in the advancement of her interests and in the preservation of European peace.

As already indicated, Le Temps maintained a position of moderation regarding the newly evident entente. The paper emphasized its importance for the furthering of French interests -- summarized as the restoration of the European equilibrium as a guarantee of peace. Mention of Alsace-Lorraine was scrupulously avoided. Recovery of the lost territories was not implied as one of the anticipated fruits of the entente. This was probably in order to avoid giving offence to the Russians, who had absolutely no desire to stir up trouble with Germany.

Silence on the part of Le Temps, the semi-official organ of the Republic, would be interpreted as evidence of Paris' moderation and discretion.

Le Temps carefully circumvented the delicate subject of ideological differences. The serious divergencies between the respective institutions of the two countries were minimized. Instead, the paper dwelt on the alleged natural sympathy between the two "races."¹² At the same time, the paper's moderate stance was preserved by not descending to the level of some enthusiasts who claimed that there was no reality in differing forms of political institutions. An example of such an extreme argument was that of Nicholas Notovitch, a Russian newspaper editor favourable to the entente. This gentleman alleged that real differences were non-existent, for both Russian autocracy and French republicanism were genuinely popular -- both stemming from the will of their respective peoples.¹³ Le Temps found no need to advance such arguments. While the entente was considered to be truly popular, as evidenced by the reaction to the Kronstadt visit, ideological differences still existed between the two Powers. In the paper's view, these real differences had no particular bearing on a matter of international affairs. The mutual advantage of a diplomatic combination alone formed a sufficient basis for expounding on the entente. There was no need for Le Temps to advance tortuous rationalizations along the line of Notovitch.

¹²See Le Temps, July 28, 1891

¹³Nicolas Notovitch, L'empereur Alexandre III et son entourage, (3rd. ed.; Paris: Paul Ollendorff, éditeur, 1893), pp. 111-112.

A perusal of French diplomatic correspondence reveals striking similarities between the attitudes of Le Temps and the Quai d'Orsay. Differing institutions were held to be of no import in the conduct of foreign affairs.¹⁴ Paul de Laboulaye, the ambassador at St. Petersburg, spoke of the end of French isolation on August 12, 1891 in terms which might easily have been found in the pages of Le Temps:

It seems that the dense cloud which, since the war of 1871, darkened Europe and France in particular, has begun to dissipate under the beneficial breath of a wind from the North. For the first time, in place of the combinations of a policy of hatred and of plots, one has heard . . . talk of lofty sentiments and of brotherhood.¹⁵

Charles de Freycinet, the Premier and Minister of War, affirmed that the status of France in the world had been enhanced. "France . . . could act on a level of equality and preserve peace, no longer at the tolerance of others, but by her own will."¹⁶ As far as the general theory of the relationship with Russia was concerned, the position of Le Temps was very close to that of the French government.

The main historical conclusion to be drawn from the Kronstadt visit was that it gave an important boost to French morale. This was reflected by signs of greater initiative and confidence on the part of the government. For example, the army manoeuvres of September 1891 were held at Nancy, a point closer to the German

¹⁴ DDF, VIII, no. 462.

¹⁵ DDF, VIII, no. 492.

¹⁶ Charles L. de S. de Freycinet, Souvenirs, 1878-1893 (Paris: Librairie Ch. Delgrave, 1913), Vol. II, p. 513.

frontier than ever before, Such an act would never have been ventured by the government of a completely isolated France. At the same time, this increase of confidence was not associated with a chauvinist resurgence. Authoritative commentary centred on the conviction that the maintenance of peace was now assured. Le Temps was emphatic regarding this point in a review on January 1, 1892 of foreign affairs for the past year.

. . . peace has not only been maintained; one can say that it has been, up to a point, consolidated. The dominance of the league of the central powers has been limited, and everyone knows that equilibrium is always a condition of stability.

Peace was now apparently assured, for a true balance had been established in Europe for the first time since 1870.

The Franco-Russian Entente: August 1891

Parallel to the public manifestation of the Franco-Russian tie, secret negotiations were held concerning a political agreement. These private talks reached a culmination with an exchange of notes between the Russian and French governments on August 27, 1891.¹⁷ The notes marking the termination of twenty years of diplomatic isolation for France did not take the form of a formal treaty. Under the Republic's constitution, such a formal instrument required ratification by the Chamber of Deputies. The Russians desired a degree of secrecy which could not be guaranteed by this procedure. Resort was thus made to the device of an exchange of notes.

¹⁷The texts appear in DDF, VIII, nos. 514 and 517.

The Russian version of the note indicated that a political agreement had become necessary due to the situation created by the renewal of the Triple Alliance and the probable adhesion to it of Great Britain. The aim of the agreement was the maintenance of peace, to be insured by joint consultation on all points concerning it and consideration of simultaneous action in the event of a menace to either the peace or one of the two parties. Although couched in similar terms, the French note of reply reflected some differences of interest. No mention was made of the alleged adhesion of Great Britain to the Triple Alliance. A theoretical point was made by stating that peace was best guaranteed by an equilibrium of European forces.¹⁸ These differences of emphasis were of a certain significance, for they reflected the diverging interpretations of the entente by the two partners.

In relation to the above, it is interesting to note that Le Temps viewed with doubt the widespread speculations about the association of Britain with the Triple Alliance. The paper based its doubt on the traditions of British foreign policy. Le Temps pointed out on July 3, 1891 that Britain had always dealt with difficulties as they arose. London had never exhibited a predilection for attempting to foresee broad, general trends of policy or to pre-arrange their solution. The Kaiser's visit to London in July 1891 served as an occasion for Le Temps (July 12, 1891)

¹⁸ The French wanted a military convention to consolidate the entente. This was not favoured by the Russians, especially Giers.

to make clear its assessment and to depreciate the import of his cordial reception:

The English . . . see in this sovereign only the grandson and son of an English queen and princess, and in the amical and affectionate relations of the two nations . . . only the "inestimable advantage of peace and world prosperity."

This statement was made at a time when the Imperial visit was lauded or denounced throughout Europe as a definite portent of some close political understanding between Germany and Great Britain. The Russians were undoubtedly quite sincere in their fears, for their condition of diplomatic isolation was relatively new. On the other hand, the French press was long familiar with this status and chose not to become agitated. Officially, the French did not advertise their doubts, especially as the Russian entente was within their grasp. Le Temps, while very favourable to the tie with Russia, did not attempt to foster it by anti-British fulminations.

The first public hint from a truly official source that a formal Franco-Russian tie existed came in a speech by Alexandre Ribot, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, at Bapaume on September 28, 1891. It was fully reproduced in the pages of Le Temps. The key part of Ribot's address was the following:

Europe, uncertain for some time, has finally rendered justice to us. A sovereign, firm and far-seeing in his aims, pacific as ourselves, has publicly manifested the deep sympathies which unite his country and ours.

Ostensibly this referred to Kronstadt, but it would appear that Ribot was making an intimation that an understanding of some sort existed

with Russia. A mere courtesy visit would not have elicited such a statement from the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Le Temps' comment on the Minister's speech was a further example of its position of studied moderation. It suggested that the speech would be a disappointment to those of a chauvinist persuasion because of its temperate and discreet tone. Solid approval was extended to the Minister for his words.

. . . true patriots, reflective and peaceful men, will be pleased with language so sober and so significant at the same time, with this diplomacy and wise reserve revealed by such a natural and legitimate sentiment of pride.¹⁹

The favourable attitude adopted by Le Temps toward the entente with Russia during the Kronstadt visit indicated a change from its earlier opposition to the tie around 1887. The change in view had been made in conjunction with that of the government and that portion of the population which paid attention to foreign affairs. At that same time, the journal remained moderate and dignified in its change, never sinking to the levels of fulsome adulation of Russia adopted by some of its contemporaries. Russia's internal affairs were not discussed as a source of ideological incompatibility between the Powers. The reader of Le Temps was always left with the impression that French interests benefitted as a result of Russia's fortunate recognition that the European equilibrium needed to be restored if peace was to be preserved.

The Franco-Russian Military Convention: Negotiation

The French government never considered the political agree-

¹⁹Le Temps, 29 September, 1891

ment of August 1891 adequate. In the words of Charles de Freycinet, the entente:

. . . was not . . . sufficiently practical. It prescribed common action, but did not set its manner or conditions. It called for a logical complement: a "military convention".²⁰

The Russians, on the other hand, remained quite satisfied with the agreement of 1891. They were unwilling to take further action toward a specific military commitment to France. As a consequence of this Russian reluctance, it was necessary for the French to avoid unseemly haste, without losing advantage of suitable opportunities for suggesting the desirability of a military convention.

A draft military convention prepared by the French general staff was finally presented to Alexander III on March 8, 1892. Surprisingly, the Czar expressed his general acceptance of the scheme by according approval in principle to mutual aid and simultaneous mobilization.²¹ However, the Czar's advisors persuaded him to delay further action on the project until he returned from his annual visit to Denmark in July. For the French, this initiated a period of frustrating delay. The chronic illness of the Russian Foreign Minister added to the dilatory progress of affairs. Indications were also received that the Russians deemed existing arrangements sufficient.²²

The pace of activity stepped up with the arrival in St. Petersburg of General Boisdeffre, the Deputy Chief of the French General Staff.

²⁰Freycinet, op. cit., p. 468.

²¹DDF, IX, no. 231.

²²DDF, IX, no. 351.

After long and difficult discussions with the appropriate Russian military authorities, a draft agreement was finally concluded on August 18 for submission to the Czar.²³ Ratification, nevertheless, did not occur for many months. The Czar first decided to wait until the draft had been examined by his Foreign Minister.²⁴ Giers was not in favour of an agreement requiring specific military commitments from Russia, and used his influence and his illness to delay ratification as long as possible. His efforts were greatly aided by difficulties in France which once more cast doubts on the viability of the Republic.

A Fruitless Interlude: January 1892 - August 1893

Once the euphoria emanating from the Kronstadt visit expired, Franco-Russian relations revealed little sign of progress in the rapprochement. Apart from the strictly secret military negotiations, there was little activity in any sphere for the development of closer ties between the two countries. No great displays of Franco-Russian solidarity were seen during this period. As a consequence, nothing of much encouragement took place for persons interested in foreign affairs. At the same time, disturbing trends appeared. Fears of a rapprochement between Berlin and St. Petersburg were only partially offset by commercial disputes

²³For a discussion of the significance of the military convention see Pierre Renouvin, *Le XIX^e siècle, Part II, De 1871 à 1914: L'apogée de l'Europe*, Vol. VI of *Histoire des relations internationales*, ed. Pierre Renouvin (8 vols, ; Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1954-59), pp. 122-127.

²⁴DDF, IX, no. 460.

between the two empires. There was also the danger that France's internal difficulties might frighten-off her new-found friend. The period can thus best be described as one of frustration and apprehension.

Faced with a lack of anything concrete upon which to base a policy, Le Temps found it necessary to make do with what was available. It directed its prestige toward calming and reassuring its readers that the tie with Russia remained secure. While retaining a restrained tone, Le Temps interpreted the scanty information available in the best possible light. Difficulties were either minimized or deplored. If totally unredeemable, some delicate matters were left unmentioned. The paper, at the same time, maintained its theoretical justification of the entente -- Russia and France guaranteed the peace of Europe by restoring the Continental balance.

As the year 1892 progressed, rumors arose of a possible return to the old intimacy between Russia and Germany. A meeting of Alexander III and Wilhelm II at Kiel on June 7, 1892 was viewed with some apprehension in France. This concern was offset on the diplomatic (and hence, secret) level by assurances from St. Petersburg that the meeting ". . . would have a character only of pure courtesy."²⁵ On June 11 Le Temps told its readers that the meeting of the two emperors was nothing more than a friendly rendezvous between relatives. The absence of any political significance ". . . was evident to everyone, even our worst enemies."

²⁵
DDF, IX, no. 334.

Le Temps persisted with such assurances. On December 23, 1892 it commented on the change of the German ambassador in St. Petersburg. While the post was acknowledged to be of great importance, this status was alleged to be due only to the excellent relationship between the imperial families. The real interests of both countries were said to be so divergent that intimate family relations had no bearing on the political sphere. The same editorial also recalled the past occasions on which Russian intervention had saved France from German aggression. It was concluded that France had no reason to fear abandonment by Russia.

The Russo-German tariff war of the time also supplied Le Temps with an opportunity to play down the possibility of a rapprochement between Berlin and St. Petersburg. An article on June 28, 1893 compared the recriminations and prolonged negotiations between the two empires with the recent successful conclusion of a Franco-Russian commercial treaty. " . . . The success of analogous negotiations between Russia and France forms a happy contrast with this result of so much effort and so many advances." Throughout, Le Temps sought to dispel the notion from the minds of its readers that France might once more be left alone in Europe. On the other hand, Le Temps simply ignored the commercial treaty's lack of concrete value.²⁶

²⁶ The insignificance of Franco-Russian economic relations, apart from the financial sphere, is discussed by Pierre Renouvin in "Les relations franco-russe à la fin du XIX^e siècle," Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique, I (May, 1959), p. 135.

The sole opportunity during this period for a demonstration of Franco-Russian solidarity came with the presence of Grand Duke Constantine, the Czar's brother, at army manoeuvres held at Nancy in June 1892. Le Temps (June 8, 1892) made the following comment:

. . . this visit . . . by Grand Duke Constantine . . . has produced such a lively impression on the crowd and opinion that it has been a surprise to everyone If the festivities of Kronstadt had been correctly interpreted in Europe as a guarantee of peace, the demonstration at Nancy would be known to have no other significance nor any other result. Nothing has changed in Europe in the course of a year Nothing proves better the strengthening of republican institutions in the country as well as in the eyes of Europe.

This event took place at the same time as the meeting of the Kaiser and the Czar at Kiel. The presence of a member of the Imperial family at Nancy served as a useful antidote for any doubt about Russian loyalty.

Le Temps made what it could of this visit.

A further area of potential difficulty appeared at this time. Ministerial instability formed, in Russian eyes, one of the most repugnant features of the Republic. The first ministerial crisis following the signature of the entente in August 1891 came with the fall of the Freycinet ministry in late February 1892.²⁷ Emile Loubet became Premier. Both Ribot and Freycinet kept their portfolios of Foreign Affairs and War. The retention of the two men most closely associated with the formation of the entente was due partly to fear of alienating the Russians by extensive personnel changes. This fear had been expressed

²⁷The loss of confidence came from defeat over a domestic issue -- an aspect of the clerical question. As a rule, ministries did not fall over foreign policy issues. Cf., Supra, pp. 11-12.

by the Russian ambassador to Freycinet at the height of the crisis.

"The Emperor does not like new faces; if you leave, he will take a long time to decide upon it [i. e., the military convention]."²⁸ The retention of the two men most connected with foreign affairs preserved continuity.

Le Temps affirmed the position that no real change had occurred with the appearance of a new ministry. In the assessment of an editorial on February 29, 1892 -- "the new cabinet does not differ from the old from the standpoint of political orientation." The paper sought to advertise the tenet that, while ministries in Paris changed, the policy of the Republic endured. Russian authorities could rest assured that France was loyal despite ministerial alterations.

It is interesting to note that Le Temps made no mention of an incident to which historians subsequently attached considerable importance. On July 14, 1892 Le Figaro, an influential Paris daily, printed an editorial entitled "Alliance or Flirtation?"²⁹

²⁸ Freycinet, op. cit., p. 497.

²⁹ This editorial is assumed to have great importance by William L. Langer in The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902 (2nd. ed.; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950), p. 34, and by Georges Michon in The Franco-Russian Alliance, 1891-1917, trans. Norman Thomas (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1929), pp. 43-44. The former believes the article to have been inspired by the Quai d'Orsay in order to frighten the Russians into a more favourable frame of mind to consider negotiations for a military convention. Renouvin, op. cit., p. 122, feels the article was a genuine manifestation of French impatience. He assumes it may have informed the Czar of the dangers of further delay. It was perhaps not wholly coincidental that, four days later, Alexander III announced that he awaited the arrival of a French negotiator.

The key segment announced:

The wooing has lasted over a year; now let us proceed with the nuptials without further ado, as is customary in respectable families. The match is a highly suitable one, but to prolong this flirtation without a definite conciliation would be unwise.³⁰

Official Russian reaction to the editorial was quite sharp, as was reported by the ambassador to St. Petersburg on August 1:

This unfortunate article of Le Figaro has produced a deplorable effect. Our enemies have profited from it by making the most malicious insinuations I fear that these insinuations have had some effect. This impression needs to be calmed.³¹

Ribot hastened to reassure the Russians and dismissed the notion that any importance could be attached to the editorial. He finally fobbed-off the affair on August 10 by stating that the article had been instigated by the Paris correspondent of the London Times.³²

Le Temps maintained an absolute silence concerning this editorial. This was unusual, for Le Temps frequently commented on articles appearing in other newspapers. Ribot may have been correct when he wrote his ambassador in St. Petersburg that little notice of the article had been taken in France.³³ Nevertheless, it is possible to explain Le Temps' silence as a matter of discretion. Owing to its immense prestige, even a condemnation by the daily would have attracted excessive attention to a matter which the government did not want publicised.

³⁰ Quoted in Michon, op. cit., pp. 43-44.

³¹ DDF, IX, no. 430.

³² DDF, IX, no. 443. It was a common practice to blame embarrassing matters on intrigues by this prominent English paper.

³³ DDF, IX, no. 433.

Too much open discussion of a formal alliance would have been embarrassing for the Quai d'Orsay. On a subject of such delicacy, it may have been decided that refraining from any mention of the Figaro editorial constituted the safest course of action.

The Panama Scandal

The Panama Scandal, another of a series of such affairs which plagued the history of the Third Republic, erupted into public view in September, 1892. Once more the Republic was made the object of attack by its enemies as a result of the failings of some of its leading members.³⁴ The scandal became one of the principal reasons for the delay in the ratification of the military convention. Doubts were again raised in the mind of Russia's ruler concerning the viability of the French regime.

One of the immediate consequences of the scandal was the parliamentary defeat of the Loubet ministry on December 6, 1892. A new cabinet was formed under the leadership of Alexandre Ribot, who also retained his former portfolio of foreign affairs. Le Temps interpreted this development as a sign of continuity, with its attending benefits. On December 7 the daily expressed the hope that a stable government had been formed. It also stated that there was no reason to fear any deviation in policy.

³⁴ A narrative and discussion of the affaire du Panama appears in Chastenet, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 307-326.

. . . this cabinet, in total, is only the former ministry with a few modifications of a secondary order However grave might be the affaire du Panama, it is, after all, only an incident of our political life The cabinet formed by M. Ribot is not only a ministry of experienced men It is the ministry most appropriate to the present situation.

This proposition of continuity had to be repeated with the outbreak of the next ministerial crisis on January 11, 1893. Ribot retained the Premiership but surrendered direction of the Quai d'Orsay to Jules Develle. Le Temps (January 12, 1893) made much of the continuing influence supposedly retained by Ribot over foreign affairs through his leadership of the ministry. The tenure of this cabinet was only slightly more extended than that of its predecessor. It fell on April 14, 1893. Neither Ribot nor Freycinet remained as the anchor-men of its successor. Le Temps, nevertheless, continued to reassure its readers that the policy of the Republic, both at home and abroad, had not undergone any fundamental change.

Another development, more disturbing than the normal occurrence of ministerial change, took place in the early days of 1893. The heated atmosphere induced by the Panama Scandal gave rise to attacks in the popular press against the Russian ambassador in Paris, Baron Mohrenheim. Among other things, the ambassador was accused of bribing members of the Chamber of Deputies. Mohrenheim, naturally enough, was most irritated and made a personal appeal to the Premier to have the attacks suppressed. Action by the government was twofold. A law was enacted which prohibited vicious press-attacks on foreign ambassadors. In addition, several Austrian and

German journalists, whose papers had devoted a great deal of space to the Baron's alleged activities, were expelled from France.

Le Temps sought neither to confirm nor deny the accuracy of the allegations made against the ambassador. Instead, the paper hammered out the theme that such allegations served only the interests of the Triple Alliance. On January 17, 1893 the following appeared in the daily:

What need be said, moreover, when these perfidious insinuations come from a foreign journalist -- a journalist from the Triple Alliance, who has the greatest interest in embroiling France and Russia? Is it still patriotism to make oneself even the unknowing auxiliary of this policy?

The tone of this and subsequent editorials expressed the hope that this distasteful business would soon be forgotten.

Unfortunately, Le Temps' hope did not correspond to the reality of the situation. Difficulties continued in the aftermath of the attacks over the form of restitution due to the ambassador. The French Foreign Minister made a personal apology and hoped that the affair would be settled. The Czar, on the other hand, indicated that he did not consider this an adequate reparation. He eventually stated that Russian honour would be satisfied only by a letter of apology to Mohrenheim from the President of the Republic.³⁵ The French had little choice but to accept. This whole rather humiliating business was kept from the public view.

The period from January 1892 to the autumn of 1893 was a

³⁵
DDF, X, no. 241.

time of scanty evidence of the entente between the two Powers. The following points may be noted on the attitude of Le Temps toward relations with Russia. First, the paper refrained from raising its readers' hopes concerning the extent of France's ties with Russia. Thus, the presence of the Grand Duke Constantine at Nancy in June 1892 was not over-emphasised. Secondly, unlike another prominent Paris newspaper, Le Figaro, the daily did not attempt to provoke activity by editorials demanding concrete action toward the conclusion of an alliance. In the third place, Le Temps sought to avoid discouraging its readers' hopes. As a result, it devoted considerable effort to downplaying the notion of a Russo-German rapprochement. Finally, Le Temps did not advertise the country's internal difficulties attending the Panama Scandal and the various ministerial crises. The paper sought to give its readers a notion of continuity underlying the surface instability of French political life. A change in the daily's stance came only with the next great display of Franco-Russian solidarity -- the Toulon visit. This spectacle furnished an opportunity for indulging in profound statements about the position of France in Europe as a result of her friendship with the Czarist Empire.

The Toulon Visit (13-29 October, 1893)

As a return gesture to the Kronstadt visit, a Russian naval squadron arrived at Toulon on October 13, 1893. The origins of the visit dated from a somewhat cautious approval in principle by the Czar

during the previous June.³⁶ The time and locale of the visit were determined only on August 1, 1893.³⁷ No mention of the impending visit appeared in the French press for some time. The official reason given was that temporary silence was necessary in order to avoid similar requests for a Russian naval visit from other Powers.³⁸ The presence of the Russian ships in other countries would have detracted from Toulon's unique importance. The Russians also feared that an extravagant French display might raise popular passions to a fever pitch. They were apprehensive that international tensions would increase as a consequence. The Russian authorities thus preferred only a modest celebration of welcome.

The first significant notice of the projected visit appeared in Le Temps only on September 9, 1893. Almost as if to allay Russian misgivings, the paper stressed the peaceful intent underlying the visit.

The visit of the Russian fleet to Toulon -- that's the reply to our visit to Kronstadt. . . . The Toulon visit will affirm anew . . . that there is in Europe a great pacific force, as a result of the reciprocal friendship of France and Russia.

It was obviously Le Temps' intention that the visit, or any act associated with it, be not considered as a provocation to any other Power. Expressions of revanchard sentiments were not considered to be appropriate to the occasion. At the same time, the paper urged that arrangements be

³⁶DDF, X, no. 264.

³⁷DDF, X, no. 358.

³⁸DDF, X, no. 323.

made to ensure the warmest possible welcome to the Russian sailors. Subsequent issues of the daily devoted a large amount of space to the extensive preparations being made both in Toulon and Paris for the reception of the Russian fleet.³⁹

The reception of the Russian ships could only be described as ecstatic. For nearly a full week the Russians were lionized in the streets and banquet halls of Paris and Toulon. The acclaim far surpassed that accorded to the French at Kronstadt and St. Petersburg. Nearly all French observers were unanimous in their approval of the enthusiasm surrounding the festivities. In private, however, some -- among them Paul Cambon, the ambassador at Constantinople -- voiced the opinion that the clamour was excessive. "Our internal policy is made in the streets. Now observe our foreign policy made on the pavements."⁴⁰ These critics felt that a certain dignity was lacking, for it might be charged that France was throwing herself at the feet of the Czar without reservations. Less tactful foreign commentators made out that Marianne was prostituting herself to the Russian bear. These observations passed unnoticed in the rapture of the event.

³⁹ An amusing example of this appeared on September 28 when the paper reported the request of the mayor of Cognac for a donation of two bottles of the local beverage from each of the town's merchants. These donations were to be sent to the Russian squadron with the town's compliments.

⁴⁰ Paul Cambon, Correspondance, 1870-1924 (3 vols.; Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, 1940), I, p. 362.

The Russians could only express pleasure and surprise at the warmth of the reception. A feeling of relief was also experienced over the fact that the celebrations did not appear to mark a resurgence of revanchard sympathy or provoke the susceptibilities of any other Powers. As the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs stated on November 4, 1893:

. . . we certainly did not doubt that our sailors would be received with the greatest cordiality. But no one could have forseen an élan so unanimous and spontaneous from the whole people, who, during an entire week, abandoned their own affairs, their business, and -- permit me to say it -- seemed to have forgotten party strife in order to be united in the joy of entertaining the representatives of a friendly nation. What was no less remarkable in the attitude of the population was its proof of wisdom, in the midst of circumstances sufficient to excite even the least inflammable imaginations.⁴¹

The Czar himself uttered similar sentiments.⁴² The Russians could only be relieved that even the French could be restrained during the most exciting affairs.

The Toulon visit gave Le Temps a legitimate opportunity to discuss the nature of the relationship with Russia. The paper's treatment of the significance of the visit concentrated on a theme of peace guaranteed by the tie with the Russian Empire. This entente assured European peace due to its preservation of continental equilibrium. Le Temps had already expressed this tenet on September 9. It was further developed on September 17 by rejecting in advance any accusations

⁴¹DDF, X, no. 415.

⁴²DDF, X, no. 475.

from the foreign press that the visit would constitute a provocative act:

We find it agreeable that the political solidarity of the two countries is affirmed before Europe. It seems impossible to us that Europe sees in this anything other than a new pledge of peace. It is not thus that the Triple Alliance aspires to interpret all its own manifestations? Is there any reason whatever that a monopoly of pacific or sincere dispositions be reserved to it?

During the visit (October 14, 1893), the paper repeated that peace was now made certain by a balance in Europe:

For a long period of time, European peace had been at the mercy of the Triple Alliance As long as this situation endured, we never felt secure At the present time, a force which is not inferior to that of the Triple Alliance balances it. World peace is thus assured for the first time.

Other factors were also considered to be of importance. On October 18, Le Temps stated that the celebrations seemed to have united the nation -- a most welcome trend following the divisions over the Panama affair. In the same vein, it was maintained that if Toulon marked a festival of peace, it also constituted a festival of confidence. The Republic's isolation was once again shown to be a phenomenon of the past. France could also be confident from a recognition of the Republic as a respectable regime through the friendship of Russia.

The Franco-Russian Military Convention: Ratification

Almost as if it formed an aftermath to Toulon, an initiative by the Russians took the military convention out of the state of limbo to which it had been relegated since the conclusion of negotiations in August 1892. On December 30, 1893 the French ambassador in St. Petersburg received a letter from the Russian Foreign Minister which

informed him that the Czar had definitely accepted the military convention.⁴³ The French reply of January 4, 1894 sealed the arrangement. The necessary corollary to the political agreement of 1891, according to the French view, had been finally achieved. Needless to say, this remained the most secret part of the alliance, not a word of it being mentioned in the press. Its terms were revealed in 1918.

The warmth of the Toulon visit may have persuaded the Czar to ratify the convention insofar as it convinced him of French restraint and loyalty. However, as is well known, other factors played a more important role in ending Alexander III's hesitation. The German Army Law of 1892 had involved substantial increases of the Kaiser's forces. Commercial disputes persisted. Russia's need for French loans was acute. Finally, the Siam Crisis had shown that France could adopt a firm attitude against Great Britain. This formed a considerable inducement. In any case, the convention had been ratified and French security had been made more certain. The formative period of the relationship was over. It was now quite accurate to refer to a Franco-Russian Alliance.

Throughout this formative period, Le Temps was a strong and consistent supporter of the entente with Russia. The close relationship with Russia was justified on the grounds that it restored a power-equilibrium on the Continent, which in turn assured the preservation

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DDF, X, no. 488.

of peace. Bismarckian Germany, by its domination of the Continent through a complex alliance system, had disturbed this 'natural' condition. European hegemony by one Power did not guarantee peace. A more natural situation had been restored with the termination of German hegemony as a result of the Franco-Russian entente. Through a balance of forces, French security was increased and her old diplomatic isolation terminated. Le Temps consistently pointed out that national confidence was increased as a result of the entente. The nation was now confident of the role of her own will in the preservation of peace. Peace no longer depended upon the good will of one Power bloc. France was able to play a freer role and enjoy her rightful place as a Great Power. The Republic was also strengthened both internally and externally, for the friendship with Russia disproved the charge of the regime's enemies that it could not engage in an active or successful foreign policy. Thus, Le Temps made the point that it was the Republic which had welcomed the Russians at Toulon. No advantage accrued to the Royalists from the celebrations. During the course of this formative period, Le Temps insisted on the pacific nature of the Russian entente. The paper never implied that any aggressive intent was involved. Alsace-Lorraine was never mentioned in connection with revanche. Its recovery was never suggested as an immediately realizable prospect. The stance of the paper was dignified, restrained, and patriotic. French interests were equated with those of Europe.

In general lines of policy, it may be concluded that Le Temps'

stand coincided with the position of the government. For example, most authorities agree that the entente -- at least at this stage -- was purely defensive and peaceful in intent.⁴⁴ Documentation indicates that the Paris government was not concerned with revanche as an immediate policy objective. It appeared primarily interested in peace through the restoration of a Continental balance of power. In this new order, France could play an active role. The pages of Le Temps mirrored the view of the government as far as security allowed.

⁴⁴ Cf., Renouvin, op. cit., pp. 118-127. Langer, op. cit., pp. 57-60. Luigi Albertini, The Origins of the War of 1914, trans. & ed. Isabella M. Massey (3 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), I, pp. 76-77. Sidney B. Fay, The Origins of the World War (2nd. ed., 2 vols. in one; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1930), pp. 119-124.

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST DOUBTS (January 1894 - May 1896)

The period between the signing of the Franco-Russian military convention and the visit of Nicholas II to France in the autumn of 1896 witnessed the first practical applications of the tie between the two Powers.¹ Nevertheless, French leaders found little satisfaction in these. Rather, a certain degree of disillusionment concerning the value of the alliance became discernible. This feeling was reflected in a letter of Gabriel Hanotaux, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, dated May 24, 1895:

Our affairs at St. Petersburg progress at a rather mediocre rate. After the solid coup de main which we have given [i.e., the Far Eastern Triplice and Kiel], . . . [the Russians] twiddle their thumbs and then proceed, without informing us, with a whole series of combinations or flirtations with others In the space of six months, not one act or gesture All demonstrations of friendship are given to others, when it is we who have done everything!²

¹ Le Temps' treatment of these particular applications (i.e., in the Far and Near East) is covered in Chapter VI of this thesis. A recent account of French policy in this period appears in Thomas M. Iiams, Dreyfus, Diplomats and the Dual Alliance: Gabriel Hanotaux at the Quai d'Orsay (1894-1898) (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1962). The initial years of the Franco-Russian Alliance are given a stimulating treatment by A. J. P. Taylor in "Les premières années de l'Alliance russe (1892-1895). Revue Historique, CCIV, no. 1 (1950), 62-76.

² DDF, XII, no. 32.

In official circles, such sentiments tended to increase as the dangers and inconveniences of the alliance became more apparent as compared to its more obvious advantages. For example, the tie with Russia threatened to embroil France in the Near East. In public view, the entente assumed the character of something of a humiliation. The Republic seemed so closely tied to Russia that, when the Czar's policy included more friendly relations with Germany, France was dragged along in Russia's wake. At Russian insistence, France had to participate, reluctantly, in the ceremonies marking the opening of the Kiel Canal in June 1895. Considerable resentment arose in France over what was considered inadequate compensation for the sacrifice of association with Germany. The government was charged with toadying to Russia. For example, Charles Maurras, an inveterate enemy of the Republic, charged in 1905 that these developments were only a continuation of a tale of disaster which constituted the history of the regime.

The pure ineptitude of her political constitution placed the eldest daughter of civilization under the protection of a half uncultivated, troubled . . . [and] exploited empire We came to be directed by Russia Here began our folly Russia pushed us into the arms of Germany.³

This was a condemnation shared by critics on the Left.⁴ The tie with Russia, instead of ensuring French autonomy from German hegemony, seemed to be forcing the Republic into collaboration with Berlin.

³ Maurras, op. cit., pp. 41-43.

⁴ Michon, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

The position adopted by Le Temps during this period may be summed up as one of making the most out of what was available. The paper remained a strong supporter of the entente, but it was sometimes at a loss in making a case for it in the absence of any significant Franco-Russian demonstrations of solidarity. Developments were interpreted in the best possible light -- equilibrium and peace. Critics of the association with Russia were dismissed as not being true Frenchmen or insignificant elements seeking only to stir up trouble. Above all, the daily sought to convey to its readers the necessity for restraint and responsibility.

A Minor Portent:
The Russo-German Commercial Treaty

A treaty signed on February 10, 1894 finally terminated the long tariff war between the two empires. In itself, this matter was not of much importance in the general context of European politics. Nevertheless, it may be considered the initiation of a Russo-German détente in which France became unwillingly involved.

Russian officials made efforts to calm French apprehensions about this alarming trend. Thus, on March 16, 1894, the French ambassador in Berlin reported the following statement by his Russian colleague, Count Shuvalov:

The Germans . . . in proper terms, pursued a political goal. We profited from it by obtaining some material advantages As for believing that the treaty of commerce will lead, in itself, to a new orientation of the Czar's external policy, that is pure illusion.⁵

⁵DDF, XI, no. 74.

Shuvalov had gone on to say that better Russo-German relations furthered the cause of peace -- to which all Powers were devoted. This statement was interpreted by the French ambassador as a wish on the part of St. Petersburg for the French press to remain calm on the issue. He suggested that it might be beneficial if the press stressed the material advantages gained by Russia from the treaty and that, in the political sphere, Russia was still the intimate friend of France.

Le Temps (February 8, 1894) had already taken such a stand. In its estimation, the Russo-German treaty served to strengthen peace, the greatest desire of Alexander III. There was nothing in this détente between St. Petersburg and Berlin for France to fear:

It is this sentiment [of peace], identical to that which animates the policy of France, which has made and which cements an agreement perfectly compatible with all such rapprochements which assure the world of such great benefits.

There was little suggestion that the recent treaty would have any political significance. Nevertheless, despite Le Temps' assurances, the fact of improved Russo-German relations as signalled by the conclusion of this commercial treaty would have a significant effect on France. The entente with Russia, which was supposed to protect France from Germany, instead forced her into closer collaboration with Berlin.

A Change of Personnel

Within a space of a few months during the course of 1894 and 1895, the individuals closely associated with the formation of the

Franco-Russian tie departed from the scene. In France, Ribot and Freycinet had been forced out of office long before during the Panama Scandal. To their departure was added that of President Sadi-Carnot at the hands of an Italian anarchist on June 25, 1894. His untimely death was of no practical significance to the fate of the Alliance, but the removal of the head-of-state of the Kronstadt and Toulon era did hold a certain symbolic importance. During this period, Gabriel Hanotaux made his first appearance as Minister of Foreign Affairs, assuming that position on May 30, 1894. He was to enjoy an exceptionally long tenure at the Quai d'Orsay, holding the post continuously until June 28, 1898, except for a brief interlude between November 1, 1895 and April 29, 1896.⁶ The length of his tenure was to be surpassed in the Third Republic only by Delcassé and Briand. Le Temps commented on May 31, 1894 that Hanotaux was a good choice for the position due to his experience and training. The paper asserted that it was a pleasure to see the Republic's foreign affairs directed by a person with an adequate background in the technical skills of diplomacy.⁷

In the first days of November 1894, Alexander III died after a brief illness. Le Temps gave extensive coverage to every available detail of the Czar's last hours. On November 3 the paper paid the

⁶The best account of Hanotaux's career is contained in Iiams, op. cit.

⁷Hanotaux had been trained as a historian and had served as an official at the Quai d'Orsay. At this point, he was not an active politician or member of the Chamber of Deputies.

following tribute to the late Czar: "he was a friend of France

We cannot forget that he came as the first -- he, the arbiter of Europe-- to place his hand in the hand of France." It concluded by expressing the hope that his successor, the young emperor Nicholas, would strengthen and maintain the European equilibrium established by his father.

The accession of Nicholas II raised the question of the continuity of Russian foreign policy. Under Alexander III there had been reasonable assurance against alterations. In the words of Le Temps (October 19, 1894):

. . . While Alexander III lives, the external . . . policy of Russia will not undergo . . . changes which some writers, hardly aware . . . of the continuity of the House of Romanov, already reckon upon with an indecent levity.

With Nicholas II continuity of policy was not entirely clear immediately upon his succession. Some speculation arose about the course he would follow in foreign affairs.

One source of conjecture had arisen even while Alexander III was still alive from Nicholas' insistence on betrothal to Alice of Hesse-Darmstadt, a German princess. Le Temps (April 21, 1894) hastened to assure its readers that the engagement of the heir to the Russian throne and a German princess had no importance in the area of foreign policy. The paper's case for this assessment was derived from the observation that, while the princess' relatives sat on many thrones, this seemed to have little impact on international relations. If, the paper continued, family relationships of ruling houses were important, Europe would enjoy universal peace -- a rather dubious expectation.

Royal marriages were concluded to be of interest only to the families concerned. This article seemingly reflected a report of the same day from the French ambassador in Berlin.

The union about to be sealed between the Russian heir and a German princess . . . will produce in France a distressing impression. It must, however, be recognised that the number of young women issuing from ruling families is very limited . . . And then, one can ask if princely marriages in our time have a real influence on the policy of peoples.⁸

The ambassador concluded by expressing the hope that the French press would not exaggerate the importance of the expected marriage. This trust was fulfilled by Le Temps.

Upon the death of Alexander III, the question of the continuity of Russian policy was discussed in a more open manner. From the beginning Le Temps took the stand that no change could be expected. Referring to the solidity of Franco-Russian ties, the daily stated on November 3, 1894 that:

These bonds will not be broken, and, since Franco-Russian amity rests on a community of interests between the two peoples as well as on their reciprocal sympathies, we remain certain that political relations between Russia and France will not be changed.

These public assurances were paralleled in the diplomatic sphere. In a letter of appreciation dated November 11, 1894 for the condolences offered by the President of the Republic, Nicholas II wrote:

Discerning with piety the elevated views of the Emperor Alexander III, I am happy to perpetuate the relations sealed by him in a spirit of peace and equity whose benefits are recognised by the entire civilised world.⁹

⁸DDF, XI, no. 97.

⁹DDF, XI, no. 277.

Nicholas considered the continuation of his father's policies as a "sacred duty."¹⁰

During this period Le Temps made much of the continuity of the course steered by the new emperor. On January 9, 1895 a letter from the paper's special correspondent in St. Petersburg stated that Nicholas II carried on in the same way as had his father. This point was given clearer expression on February 3, 1895:

. . . He has not lost a day, not even an hour, in order to affirm publicly and solemnly [the foreign policy of Alexander III]. The first acts which followed his advent have demonstrated clearly that he loyally accepts . . . his paternal heritage He has resolved to cultivate, affirm and tighten the entente established by Alexander III between the only two great military powers of the Continent which are outside the orbit of the Triple Alliance and which find themselves called upon to create an equilibrium to this international combination.

In summary, Le Temps consistently suggested that France need not fear the fact that Russia had a new ruler. This stand corresponded to official assurances made through diplomatic channels.

An Anglo-Russian Rapprochement?

A curious affair associated with the death of Alexander III was the rumour of an Anglo-Russian rapprochement during the last two months of 1894. The origins of this rumour were twofold. First, an Anglo-Russian agreement in November formalized the boundaries between both countries' possessions in Central Asia. This removed

¹⁰DDF, XI, no. 284. It appears that Nicholas was largely unaware of the terms of the alliance with France prior to his father's death.

an old source of tension. The second basis for the canard was derived from the lengthy presence of the Prince of Wales (the later Edward VII) at the funeral of Alexander III. The Prince had a considerable, if undeserved, reputation as a diplomatic spellbinder.¹¹ In fact, there was very little in this speculation. The Russians were quick to assure their ally that there was no intention of abandoning them.¹²

It is interesting to note that Le Temps was not unfavourable to this alleged Anglo-Russian détente. In the paper's estimation, such a development would only serve to strengthen European independence from the Triple Alliance. On November 27, 1894 the paper stated:

. . . We do not hesitate to state that many serious reasons militate in favour of envisaging such an eventuality France, far from facing . . . a return to isolation, ought to be pleased in seeing the addition of new forces to an international arrangement which alone creates an equilibrium to the Triple Alliance.

This argument was repeated on December 8, 1894 in an article entitled "England, Russia, France."

The Franco-Russian entente . . . has assured world peace by re-establishing a European equilibrium and by giving . . . a counterweight to the Triple Alliance. It is a purely moral concert . . . but . . . sufficient . . . to guarantee Europe . . . peace . . . [and] confidence in the future It is permissible to believe that its advantages would be even greater if the equilibrium were more fully assured, and, if opposite the Triple Alliance, . . . there were a Triple Entente

¹¹ A. J. P. Taylor feels these rumours caused great anxiety among the French. See Taylor, loc. cit., p. 63. He concludes that this scare motivated later French obsequiousness to Russia.

¹² DDF, XI, no. 296.

Such a combination would be a near-absolute guarantee of peace. Le Temps did not feel there would be any danger for France in an Anglo-Russian rapprochement as long as the government made sure to associate itself in any arrangement which might ensue. France had numerous areas of dispute with Britain in the imperial sphere, but a triple entente in Europe would be a most desirable prospect for security against the Triple Alliance.

The Death of Giers

The final disappearance of an individual closely associated with the formation of the Franco-Russian tie came with the death of the Russian Foreign Minister, N. K. Giers, in late January 1895. As Giers had long suffered from chronic ill-health, his death came as no surprise. From the standpoint of policy, his passing was not excessively regretted in Paris, for he had never been considered a friend of the Franco-Russian entente. He had also been reputed to be timid, obscure, and somewhat pro-German. Le Temps hinted at this in its assessment of the late Foreign Minister on January 28, 1895:

In M. de Giers Russia does not lose a statesman of the first rank, but [rather] a diplomat of the bonne école His death is to be regretted, not because it compromises in any degree a policy of which he was not the author, . . . but because it is always unfortunate to see the disappearance of good servants of their countries.

This account could not be exactly called a laudatory estimation of a man who had held the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs for thirteen years. The paper also stated that the new Russian Foreign Minister

would surely be a more forceful personality than Giers, for Nicholas II had not shown the same determination to be his own minister as had his father. The paper was also accurate in predicting the appointment of Prince Lobanov-Rostovski, a former ambassador to Vienna to the head of the Pont des Chantres.

In France, much was expected from Lobanov -- a man moulded in French civilisation. He proved a person who could inspire the confidence of his French allies, especially Hanotaux. Nevertheless, Lobanov remained a Russian statesman. He tended to view the entente as merely a useful instrument for a broad and energetic Russian policy in all parts of the world.¹³ He often gave the impression of pulling France reluctantly in his wake. It was during his brief tenure in office that France suffered the Kiel "humiliation" discussed below.

The Kiel "Humiliation"

The official opening of the Kiel Canal in June 1895 should not have constituted an incident which would arouse the indignation of French patriots. Nevertheless, it formed one of the more delicate problems faced by the French government during the early years of the Franco-Russian Alliance. Kiel became the symbol of the difficulties which the Russian tie brought for the Republic.

Extensive festivities were planned by the German government

¹³ For more detail, see Grunwald, op. cit., pp. 203-204.

to celebrate the completion of the sea-link between the North and Baltic seas. Part of the envisaged ceremonies included the presence of warships from maritime Powers. Along with other nations, France was invited to participate.¹⁴ For reasons associated with the memories of 1870 and fear of provoking ultra-nationalist agitation, the French government had no intention of accepting. Hanotaux outlined the government's position on February 27, 1895:

The unanimous impression of the Council of Ministers has been that . . . an affirmative reply would perhaps offer more inconveniences than advantages. From now until June, the question would be raised in the polemics of the press and perhaps in parliamentary discussions. Tempers could end by becoming embittered. Thus a veritable tension would be provoked at the very hour when the arrival of the warships would take place at Kiel.¹⁵

Despite these arguments, France was unable to avoid attendance at the Kiel festivities. Even prior to Hanotaux's expression of his government's position, word had been received from Russia on February 20 that the Imperial Government did not see any reason for a French refusal. According to M. Chickhine, the ad interim Foreign Minister, his ruler "did not see any reason for France to hesitate in associating itself with this purely international solemnity and that Russia would certainly accept the invitation."¹⁶ This was followed by an even more emphatic note from the Czar himself on March 2, 1895:

It seems to me that the French Government is wrong in hesitating to reply to the German invitation. Once all Powers have accepted it, French participation, in concert with us, is indispensable.¹⁷

¹⁴ DDF, XI, no. 369.

¹⁵ DDF, XI, no. 382.

¹⁶ DDF, XI, no. 373

¹⁷ DDF, XI, no. 384.

This note later became known as the "Kiel Ultimatum". As a result, a meeting of the French Council of Ministers on March 3, 1895 concluded that there was little choice but acceptance. The consequences of a refusal were later summed up by the French ambassador to St. Peterburg:

Our refusal would have been an act which would have isolated us from the rest of Europe and would have surely destroyed the concert with Russia, the existence of which we desire so much to prove.¹⁸

At the same time, the French Government stipulated that their acceptance depended upon the meeting of certain conditions which would guarantee the preservation of national honour. There were to be no German ships present at Kiel whose names recalled the defeats of 1870. In addition, the spectacle was not to be considered to imply any political importance. Finally, the French ships were to depart early from Kiel; the reason given being the anniversary of the assassination of President Carnot. The Germans made no objections to these conditions.

Paris also hoped to transform the affair into something of a manifestation of Franco-Russian solidarity. This was urged by Hanotaux on March 3, 1895.¹⁹ The French presence at Kiel was felt to be such a humiliation that some compensation was essential if the Government was to check successfully the denunciations of its enemies.

¹⁸ DDF, XI, no. 399.

¹⁹ DDF, XI, no. 388.

Czar Alexander had well understood that there was only one way to guard the secret at the base of affairs -- multiply external manifestations. This same policy must be followed under the present circumstances under pain of compromising both the secret and even the basis of the entente. Since there is a concert, the concert ought to be apparent It is on this point that it is necessary to succeed at any price.²⁰

It was concluded that suitable compensation would be achieved by a simultaneous entry into Kiel harbour of the French and Russian squadrons after a prior rendezvous. Much to Paris' chagrin, the Russians proved very dilatory in meeting this request.²¹ The Czar consented to a prior rendezvous and simultaneous entry only on June 5. In addition, however, added compensation was accorded in the form of a presentation of a high Russian decoration to the President of the Republic.²²

Throughout the period preceding the commencement of the Kiel festivities, official circles in both France and Russia indicated concern over the attitude of the Paris press to the affair. Authorities on several occasions expressed the hope that the press would not be overly preoccupied with the matter.²³ As might be **expected**, this hope was fulfilled, at least in part, by the position adopted by Le Temps toward the impending inauguration of the Kiel Canal. Although Le Temps probably had no knowledge of the "Kiel Ultimatum", its position toward the affair was one which agreed in substance with that of the Russian government.

²⁰ DDF, XI, no. 389.

²¹ DDF, XI, no. 406 and DDF, XII, no. 40.

²² DDF, XII, no. 49.

²³ DDF, XI, no. 391 and no. 398.

The paper's first mention of the Kiel festivities came on February 28, 1895 in a report that the Russian Government intended to dispatch a squadron to the opening of the canal. By March 1 the daily gave its readers the impression that French participation was the inevitable and only possible course. On this date an editorial entitled "Question mal posée" sought to convince its readers that no political importance could be attached to the likely presence of French ships at Kiel. French participation would constitute nothing more than a simple act of international courtesy. According to the daily:

Between peoples as between individuals, the most elementary civility imposes certain exterior forms It would be not at all reasonable to decline an invitation which all Europe has accepted. The unanimity of the démarche removes any special character from it Since one will see Russian ships in the waters of Kiel, is it not very natural to see French vessels?

International good manners sometimes demanded unpalatable decisions. In the same editorial the paper indicated that Kiel would not be the first time that France had participated in international activities held on German soil. The paper concluded by criticizing those who sought to create an issue out of any French participation.

In spite of the isolated efforts of some newspapers, there is not, and ought not to be, any question on this point. In the same manner as we accredit official representatives with diverse Powers, we accept and return civilities which are required by international savoir-faire in time of peace. The obligations of external etiquette and correctness have nothing to do with affairs of the heart Patriotism has never . . . prevented the observation of rules of decorum in use among civilized countries.

The opening of the Kiel Canal could be likened to the inauguration of similar projects at Suez and Corinth. To these no political importance

could be attributed. In short, Le Temps made an appeal for common sense and moderation. French participation in a German celebration would not be, in itself, a disaster and would certainly not imply a change in governmental policy. Another facet of Le Temps' stand toward Kiel became evident on March 4, 1895 when the paper expressed the opinion that too much was being made of the affair. In its view, the less said, the better.

Criticism of the impending visit provoked exactly what the French Government had hoped to avoid -- interpellations in the Chamber of Deputies and Senate on May 30 and June 10. These challenges sought to discover the reasons for the Government's decision to participate in an affair sponsored by the nation's main potential enemy. However, the Government was able to evade these interpellations with relative ease. Nevertheless, Hanotaux felt it necessary to use the word "alliance" for the first time in referring to the relationship with Russia in order to retain Moderate support of the Ministry. In justifying the first official announcement of the Alliance, Hanotaux stated that ". . . it was not only necessary, . . . [but] indispensable . . . [to] the fate of the Cabinet and the whole Franco-Russian policy."²⁴ Le Temps, in commenting on the reply to the first interpellation, stated on June 2, 1895 that:

. . . It is necessary to be grateful to M. Hanotaux for having dealt with [this interpellation] with as much candour as prudence, . . . Harangues . . . [do not constitute] true patriotism. The state of peace and [the conduct of] international relations have obligations

²⁴DDF, XII, no. 61.

which are offensive to certain deeply respectable susceptibilities, [but] a government would be missing its essential duties if it made itself too attentive to the counsels of obstinate resentment Mr. Hanotaux has said [all this] . . . or made it known without uttering a word too much or too little. The Minister must be congratulated for the courage in acting as he did

Le Temps' next comment on the interpellations came on June 12. These were denounced as vague and aimed only at causing trouble. It once more praised the reply made by Hanotaux for the Government.

With the great good fortune of inspiration, he has announced on this occasion that nothing would be more false than the prejudices of those who believe that France, under the Republic, could not have a continuous and persevering policy Methods change with circumstances, but the goal remains the same.

The paper then went on to point out that the international situation of France had undergone great changes since Kronstadt but:

This new situation necessarily carries with it duties as well as advantages. Our means of action have developed, but . . . also our obligations and responsibilities. Does the Government commit a crime [if] . . . the alliance with Russia does not yet bear all the fruits of which the League of Patriots dreams?

While isolated in Europe, France could afford the luxury of remaining aloof from international celebrations held in Germany. This was no longer possible. The paper also hinted that M. Déroulède et. al. could not expect an immediate return of the lost provinces as a result of the Russian alliance.

Le Temps was not alone in its relief over the Government's handling of the interpellations. The Czar himself expressed his pleasure over the way Hanotaux had dealt with the situation.

I have followed . . . the debates of your Parliament with the most lively interest. It is a false patriotism which has motivated the authors of these interpellations because they are certainly not those

who would see the first flames if they succeed in troubling the peace. But the sane portion of the country was with you The immense success achieved by the Government is the proof. How well M. Hanotaux spoke! I have always admired the firmness of his language.²⁵

Nicholas II also stated that he had no objection to the use of the word "alliance" in describing the relationship between the two countries.

Is this Alliance not a fact? What reason is there to hide it? What must not be spoken of is the form of this Alliance -- that is, the existence of a military convention which must remain secret.²⁶

During the actual ceremonies at Kiel, French honour was adequately preserved. Le Temps did not give much coverage to events. Its sole major comment appeared on June 19, 1895 when the paper stated that the joint entry of the French and Russian squadrons into Kiel harbour constituted a most concrete complement to Hanotaux's use of the word "alliance". The rock-like firmness of the Alliance had been proven to all. Finally, the paper alleged that the foreign press was completely wrong in assuming that the Franco-Russian tie had been weakened by the efforts of Berlin and that the visit signalled a change in French policy in the direction of a détente with Germany.

Nevertheless, Kiel did serve as an ideal opportunity for the Republic's enemies to denounce its policy of alleged weakness and grovelling before Germany and Russia. As Charles Maurras would later assert:

It was on June 10, 1895 that word of the Russian alliance was pronounced for the first time by M. Hanotaux On the

²⁵DDF, XII, no. 76.

²⁶Ibid.

following June 18, French and Russian ships met German squadrons in the waters of Kiel at the entrance of a canal constructed with the war indemnity paid by our France to a victorious Germany. ²⁷

Similar contemporary polemics had considerable appeal, for it was not difficult to deduce that the French Government had participated only at the insistence of the Russians. Nothing could completely eliminate the bad taste sensed by many patriots.

The period between the Toulon visit and the Czar's arrival in France in October 1896 was a period of relatively little open activity in the Franco-Russian Alliance. This time was one of improved Franco-German relations, but Le Temps was quick to depreciate any suggestions of a firm rapprochement between the two Powers. This was exemplified by its comment on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Battle of Sedan on September 3, 1895.

Those who benevolently imagine that the Germans will hold neither to their conquests nor victories of 1870 -- that they are preparing to return Alsace and Lorraine to us at the first opportunity as the price of our friendship -- will see the value of these legends . . . if a new war breaks out It would be better that the brutal truth be known and seen by all Frenchmen.

The French Government also was quick to make it plain that participation at Kiel did not imply any change of attitude toward Germany. Thus, France's military and naval attachés were absent from the country between July 14 and October 15 in order to avoid the humiliation of participation in ceremonies celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the German victories of 1870.

²⁷Maurras, op. cit., p. 43.

The absence of any great demonstrations of Franco-Russian solidarity during this period made it difficult for Le Temps to find an opportunity to comment on the relationship between the two powers. Nothing was said about the visit of Prince Lobanov to Paris in October 1895.²⁸ For obvious reasons, nothing leaked out about the Russian request for French support in a possible attack on the Straits in December 1895.²⁹ Comments on conditions within Russia itself were scanty. For example, a strike by industrial workers in St. Petersburg was given comment on June 26, 1896, but only in terms that indicated that Russia had embarked on the road to industrialization. By implication, this meant that an industrial Russia would be an even greater ally to France. The coronation of the Czar in May 1896 afforded the paper an opportunity (May 26, 1896) to state that the alliance with Russia enhanced French security. In short, the position of Le Temps was one of not allowing criticism of Russia even though some of the difficulties of the Alliance were becoming apparent. The Russian alliance was too valuable to be disturbed by the criticism of the press.

²⁸ A full account of the visit, including reports on conversations between Lobanov and Hanotaux appears in Gabriel Hanotaux, "Carnets, 1893-1895," Revue des deux mondes, No. 8 (April 15, 1945), 573-588.

²⁹ DDF, XII, no. 225.

CHAPTER IV

THE GREAT MANIFESTATIONS (1896 - 1897)

French opinion received substantial compensation for the "humiliation" of 1895 in reciprocal visits of the heads of state of the two allies. Nicholas II visited Paris in October 1896 during a tour of Western Europe. In the following year, President Félix Faure visited St. Petersburg. This last event culminated with the official proclamation of the alliance in the celebrated POTHUAU toasts. Both visits constituted the greatest public displays of Franco-Russian solidarity since Kronstadt and Toulon. The press was given a good opportunity to comment on France's relationship with Russia -- its value and its purpose.

The Czar in France

One of Nicholas II's more ambitious projects for 1896 was a lengthy official tour of Western Europe from late August until late October. The Imperial party began its trip on August 25 with an itinerary including Vienna, Breslau, Berlin, Kiel, Copenhagen, Balmoral, Cherbourg, and Paris. Each place was accorded a stop of about ten days.

Discussion of a possible visit to France dated from the time of Nicholas' coronation in May 1896.¹ French authorities were most anxious for the inclusion of their country, especially with the appearance of the Czar in other West European states. Although at first somewhat concerned about the safety of himself and his family in the allegedly turbulent French capital, Nicholas was eventually persuaded to include Paris in his schedule.² President Faure forwarded an official invitation on August 1, 1896.³ Russian acceptance was swift and an announcement of the visit was made on August 4. From this point, special columns appeared in Le Temps devoted to the preparations being made in France for the welcome of the Czar and the progress of the tour.

The Imperial couple arrived at Cherbourg from England on October 5, 1896 and reached Paris by special train on the following day. In the capital, the Czar and his wife were subjected to an exhausting rounds of visits, receptions, military reviews, and parades. Every appearance made by the Russian rulers was accompanied by scenes of delirious joy by the French populace. Nicholas recorded his impressions in a letter to his mother on October 14:

The reception in Paris was tremendous I can only compare it to my entry into Moscow! I was left with a feeling of

¹DDF, XII, no. 389.

²Gabriel Hanotaux, "Carnets -- Le Tsar Nicolas II à Paris," Revue des deux mondes, No. 22 (Nov. 15, 1949). 193-198. This article consists of personal notes made by the Foreign Minister.

³DDF, XII, no. 436.

gladness to have witnessed such a touching reception, and furthermore with a feeling of quietness and contentment! ⁴

Some observers felt that the acclaim was too excessive -- Nicholas II seemed to be greeted as Emperor of the French. Such doubts, however, were restricted to only a few. Hanotaux was probably closer to expressing the consensus when he told the Czar that the present moment made the past thirty years seem only a bad dream. ⁵

The position adopted by Le Temps was one of whole-hearted enthusiasm. On September 15, 1896 the daily stated that the warmth of the reception accorded to the Russian rulers would serve as an indication of the popularity of the alliance. At the same time, the paper denied charges by socialist critics that the visit would encourage Royalism. Closely related to this point was another aspect of the Franco-Russian relationship -- the opposite constitutional structure of the two allies, a difference of which much was apparently made by the foreign press. Le Temps handled this problem by emphasising that internal differences were without significance to the alliance. As early as August 10, 1896, shortly after the official announcement of the visit, the daily argued that divergent ideologies were unimportant in view of the sympathy for the alliance shared by the French and Russian peoples.

. . . These differences do not prevent affinities of character
Men in general seek each other less because they think the same
than because they feel the same.

This was repeated, in a slightly different manner, on October 6 in a comment on the reception of the Czar and Czarina:

⁴ Edward J. Bing, ed., The Secret Letters of the Last Czar (New York and Toronto: Longman's, Green and Co., 1938), p. 113.

⁵ Hanotaux, loc. cit., p. 206

In acclaiming them, we forget that they are emperors, or even absolute emperors. We think only of the benefits of their alliance.

The bonds of the alliance transcended all divergencies.

In Le Temps' view, the most significant point of the Czar's presence in Paris was the proof it accorded to the existence of the alliance between the two nations. According to an editorial on October 7, the European Powers had originally doubted the reality of a Franco-Russian entente. Now even the most obstinate tabloids in the countries of the Triple Alliance could no longer persist in their disbelief of a Franco-Russian alliance:

One has the right . . . of hoping that the incomparable brilliance of the spectacle presently offered to the world by Czar Nicholas and France will be able to contribute to the opening of the eyes of the obstinate blind.

This proof of a close Franco-Russian relationship would also serve as an encouraging boost to the morale of patriots after the Kiel "humiliation" of the previous year.

In its assessment of the value of the Russian entente, Le Temps retained the position expressed on earlier occasions. A typical example appeared on October 10, 1896:

everyone well knows the great service that the Franco-Russian entente has rendered to the cause of general security

Peace no longer depends only on the will . . . of a single sovereign [the German Emperor]. . . . It rests, on the contrary, on a system of counter-weights and mutual limitations.

The charges by later writers, such as Michon, that the press used such opportunities to stir up revanchist sentiments do not apply to Le Temps. Any suggestion of using the alliance as an instrument for the return of

the lost provinces was studiously avoided. To Le Temps, the alliance was merely a bulwark of peace.

Aftermath: The Millerand Interpellation

The scenes of delirious enthusiasm surrounding the Imperial visit provoked an interpellation by the Socialist Deputy, Alexander Millerand, on November 21, 1896.⁶ The Minister of Foreign Affairs was challenged to divulge whether an agreement with Russia existed and what constituted its nature, for "it was necessary to know if this agreement would not some day lead us into adventure which Parliament -- alone having the right of peace or war -- had never been consulted . . . on."⁷ Hanotaux's reply was typical of governmental evasiveness on anything hinting at the military conventions:

That which can and ought to be publicly expressed has already been done in firm, correct, and precise terms by both His Majesty the Emperor of Russia and the President of the Republic⁸

A large majority of Deputies were satisfied with this answer and the Government survived the challenge with ease.

Le Temps' comment on November 23 strongly approved Hanotaux's reply that everything possible had already been divulged.

⁶The delay in making this interpellation was due to the fact that the French Parliament was not in session during the Czar's visit. The Government was denounced in some quarters for rather shady methods of securing funds without Parliamentary sanction for the financing of the celebrations. Finally, the Czar's impending visit had not been officially announced until Parliament had been prorogued.

⁷Cited in Le Temps, November 22, 1896.

⁸Ibid.

The responsibilities of the Government were said to be so great in this matter of the Russian alliance that it could not be subjected to the vagaries of the Chamber. Le Temps concluded with a few parting shots at deputies whose sole aim seemed to be the creation of difficulties for the Government.

The Death of Lobanov and the Appearance of Muraviev

The practical political importance of Nicholas II's tour of Western Europe was diminished by the sudden death of Prince Lobanov, his Foreign Minister, on August 30, 1896. He was temporarily replaced by Chichkine, an insignificant bureaucrat, with whom Hanotaux was unimpressed.⁹ Lobanov's death was viewed as something of a tragedy in French official circles, especially because of the time when it took place. Writing to Hanotaux on August 31, the ambassador at St. Petersburg stated that:

The presence of Prince Lobanov in Paris would have given the visit of the Russian Emperor a character which cannot be given by those who replace him From this point of view, we must profoundly regret the sad event which has deprived us of our most solid support.¹⁰

This estimation was not shared by all observers. Paul Cambon, the ambassador in Constantinople, viewed Lobanov's passing as the removal of a dominating influence on Hanotaux which was not always in keeping with French interests. According to a letter of September 1, 1896:

So Lobanov is dead However, I do not regret Lobanov He exercised a dominant attraction on Hanotaux and he

⁹Hanotaux, loc. cit., p. 214

¹⁰DDF, XII, no. 449.

had contributed more than anyone in allowing affairs in Turkey to drift to where they now are.¹¹

Le Temps expressed its regrets, but did not consider that Lobanov's death would result in a change in Russian policy. It was the Czar himself who determined the course of Russian diplomacy. In the paper's words of September 1, 1896:

Nothing would be more ridiculous than seeking to make the efficient cause of a diplomatic revolution out of the sudden disappearance of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nicholas II. It is not a Richelieu who has so prematurely departed and it is not a Louis XIII whom Prince Lobanov served with such devotion and ability.

The late Minister had been nothing more than an obedient follower and strong partisan of the Czar's policy of support for the Franco-Russian entente and the maintenance of the European equilibrium. Finally, the paper told its readers that "this policy . . . will assuredly not fail through want of one man."

The appointment of a permanent successor did not take place until the Russian New Year (January 13, 1897). During the lengthy interregnum, numerous rumours circulated concerning the possible choice of a permanent Minister. Revealing a degree of impatience, Le Temps (January 12, 1897) stated that "the interim still endures at Petersburg and we see once more verified the adage that nothing lasts like the provisional." At the same time, the daily refused to speculate on the possible identity of the new Foreign Minister, whenever

¹¹Cambon, op. cit., p. 411. The ambassador's feelings were probably the result of resentment that Paris was not particularly attentive to his advice concerning the Near East. Paris, he charged, was engrossed more in co-operating with Russia than in protecting French interests.

he would be chosen. The editorial of January 12 discussed several candidates, enumerating the points for and against them, but specifically stated that these were given only for what they were worth. There existed such a deluge of conjecture that Le Temps assumed the best course lay in accepting nothing until the event took place.

The Czar's choice finally fell on Count Muraviev, the Minister at Copenhagen. This came as something of a surprise, for the man had previously held only relatively obscure posts. For this reason the French ambassador seems to have felt it necessary to report that " . . . the general sentiment is that his nomination is a new affirmation of the policy of entente with France" ¹² This was repeated, less forcefully, after Muraviev's first diplomatic reception on January 18, 1897:

The entente between France and Russia will be his line of conduct, but at the same time he will seek to conserve good relations with other Powers in order to maintain peace. ¹³

Le Temps' preliminary assessment of Count Muraviev appeared on January 16, 1897. The paper indicated relief at a permanent choice after such a delay:

. . . The presence of a definite Minister at Petersburg will doubtless preserve French policy from certain small difficulties, surprises, and questions to which it had been exposed by the temporary conduct of a provisional Minister

While Muraviev's previous post at Copenhagen may have been important to the Imperial Family, it was of secondary significance in the broader context. Muraviev was not felt to possess the intimate know-

¹²DDF, XIII, no. 67.

¹³DDF, XIII, no. 69.

ledge of France enjoyed by his predecessor. Nevertheless, the daily concluded that France could rest confident, for it was the Czar who really determined Russian policy.

This young prince has given . . . sufficient evidence . . . of his unalterable loyalty to that policy of entente, alliance, and co-operation to which France and Russia owe the best of their security, Europe its repose, and world peace its solidity.

Lacking anything better, Le Temps thus fell back on its old stand of mutual loyalty, sympathy and interest.

The Imperial Visits

The year 1897 was marked by a rapid succession of state visits to Russia in return for the Czar's tour of the previous year. First came the visit in April of the Austro-Hungarian ruler, Franz-Joseph, and his Foreign Minister, Count Goluchowsky. He was followed by Kaiser Wilhelm and Count Bülow in August. Considerable speculation was raised in France concerning the political aims of the Central Powers as a consequence of these visits. Initially, Le Temps sought to discount the possibility of any significant change. Thus the paper stated on April 27, 1897 that " . . . these exchanges of visits do not imply at present any change in the European equilibrium and the system of alliances" Hanotaux, on the other hand, was nowhere near as sanguine toward the apparent efforts of the Triple Alliance Powers to effect a rapprochement with Russia.¹⁴

The visit of Franz-Joseph and his Foreign Minister met with

¹⁴DDF, XIII, no. 211.

considerable success, for it culminated with the Austro-Russian circular note of April 30, 1897, placing the Balkan Question "on ice." According to a report from the French ambassador in Vienna on May 3, 1897, Goluchowsky stated that:

On both sides there exists an equal desire for the maintenance of the status quo and we are convinced that, for the future, . . . Russia has no designs on the Balkan Peninsula.¹⁵

Similar satisfaction with the détente between two traditional rivals was expressed by the Czar in an audience granted to the French ambassador on May 27.¹⁶ Hanotaux was later to remark that this development signified a complete change from the previous year. At that time, Lobanov had informed him that Russia considered Austria as its real enemy.¹⁷

The initial stance adopted by Le Temps toward the visit of the Austrian emperor was that little would change as a result. On April 27, 1897 its readers were informed that:

Between France and Russia agreement is too solid It rests . . . on the clear knowledge of a community of interests and on loyal fidelity to engagements entered into

By the end of the visit, Le Temps' maintenance of a discreet silence revealed a lesser degree of assurance. The public was made aware of

¹⁵DDF, XIII, no. 222. Details of the agreement may be found in M. S. Anderson, The Eastern Question, 1774-1923 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), pp. 261-264 and in Langer, op. cit., pp. 373-383.

¹⁶DDF, XIII, no. 241.

¹⁷Georges Dethan, "Les papiers de Gabriel Hanotaux et la proclamation de l'entente franco-russe (1895-1897), "Revue d'histoire diplomatique, XLVII (Jul.-Sep., 1966), 208

the Austro-Russian détente through a communiqué by Muraviev and Goluchowsky at the conclusion of the visit. This was reproduced by Le Temps without comment. Only on August 7 did the daily venture to state that " . . . it has been a political démarche of the first order."

Following the Austrians, the Kaiser and his Foreign Secretary appeared in St. Petersburg from August 7-11. By most accounts the visit was quite successful, at least in its public aspects. The visit was aimed at restoring the Russo-German ties broken in 1890 and securing a corresponding weakening of the entente with France.¹⁸ This was reported by the French ambassador.¹⁹ Nevertheless, Hanotaux appears to have felt there was no reason for excessive concern about the activities of the bombastic Kaiser. In addition, the Russians had given assurances that their co-operation with Germany would apply only as long as it did not detract from the interests of France or Russia.²⁰

Le Temps (August 7, 1897) reflected the Foreign Minister's confidence by stating that the Kaiser's visit would be a source of speculation only if it were not followed by that of the President of the Republic. Nevertheless, the same article also indicated less confidence than on April 27. With the announcement of the Muraviev-Goluchowsky circular, it could no longer be said that such visits always lacked political significance. However, this was still maintained to be the

¹⁸Langer, op. cit., pp. 445-446.

¹⁹DDF, XIII, no. 293.

²⁰Gabriel Hanotaux, "Voyage de M. Félix Faure en Russie (18-31 août, 1897), "Revue d'histoire diplomatique, XLVII (Jul. - Sep., 1966), 216.

normal case. In any event, the daily (August 11, 1897) returned to something quite close to its earlier position when it commented upon the completion of Wilhelm II's sojourn in Russia. "In one word, they (Wilhelm and Nicholas) have made known to their peoples that nothing in the world has changed"

The Visit of President Faure and the
Proclamation of the Alliance

President Faure arrived in Russia soon after the departure of the Kaiser. This visit marked a high point of the public life of the alliance in its early years, for it was here that Nicholas II first described the relationship between the two countries by using the word "alliance." Naturally enough, the affair was viewed with lively interest and great enthusiasm. Le Temps' pages, as was usual during such displays, gave extensive coverage.

Concerning the purpose of the visit, Hanotaux wished to make it a real public manifestation of the Alliance following the visits of the Austrian and German rulers. A definite acknowledgement of the Alliance was required in view of the fact that it seemed less and less clearly directed against Germany in the popular view. As Hanotaux wrote prior to leaving with the President for Russia: "Everywhere -- in Europe, Asia, Africa -- the alliance has been proven. It can now

show itself in public."²¹ Something which could be viewed in the European context was necessary, especially in face of charges by critics that the country's strength was being dissipated in overseas adventures, the consequence of excessive dependence upon Russia.

Le Temps (July 2, 1897) took the official invitation of President Faure from the Russian Government as an opportunity to denounce the critics of the alliance.

Those who, at the present time, criticize so bitterly the Russian alliance have never taken the exact conditions of its formation into account. In an alliance which has restored Continental equilibrium, which has consolidated peace by basing it on a system of counterweights and equality of forces and not only on the fragile base of the good will . . . of an all-powerful sovereign [the German emperor] , . . . [these critics] know and wish to see only a kind of offensive syndicate -- a machine of war destined to strike as soon as possible. This misapprehension has warped and still perverts all their judgements.

The paper again denounced the alliance's critics on the eve of Faure's

²¹Dethan, loc cit., p. 211. Hanotaux's remarks concerning Asia referred to the intervention of France, Russia and Germany in protest against the terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki (April, 1895) concluding the Sino-Japanese War. It is true that France participated in the protest against the Japanese peace terms for the sake of the alliance (see DDF, XI, no. 440). It is less than accurate to consider this "proof" of the alliance a particularly propitious event, for German participation in the protest created considerable disaffection in France. The reference to Africa related to protests by the Powers against a British attempt to use internationally controlled Egyptian funds for the conquest of the Sudan (i. e., the Dongala Expedition of March 1896). Russian protests here might be considered a "proof" of the alliance. On the other hand, they could equally be considered evidence of the efficacy of the Concert of Europe (i. e., the protests were not restricted to Russia and France). At any rate, British conquest of the Sudan was not thwarted. See Chapter VI for further discussion of Hanotaux's Asian and African "proofs."

departure for Russia (August 19, 1897).

It is necessary to recall . . . the acclamations of the crowd, [and] the votes of Parliament which, if one neglects an infamous rump of Socialists, have always approved the entente with Russia unanimously. The Franco-Russian entente is not a simple diplomatic combination The policy which it realises has its roots in the reciprocal affection of the two nations.

It was implied that no critic could hope to counter such potent arguments in favour of the alliance.

During the course of the visit, the pages of Le Temps were covered with editorials and articles expounding in lyrical tones on the marriage of Republican France and Imperial Russia for the benefit of humanity and the cause of peace. The tie between the two countries was said to be permanent. According to Le Temps (August 26, 1897):

. . . The Russian and French people, who love and understand one another . . . are bound by unbreakable and fraternal regard.

This was said to be evidenced by the allegedly enthusiastic welcome extended by the populace in St. Petersburg.

The highpoint of the visit came on August 26 with an exchange of toasts between President Faure and Nicholas II on board the POTHUAU, the warship which had conveyed the French head of state. President Faure began by stating:

Our two nations, friendly and allied, guided by a common ideal of civilization, right and justice, are fraternally united in the most sincere and loyal of ties.

To which Nicholas II replied:

Your stay among us has created a new bond between our two friendly and allied nations, [which are] equally resolved to contribute all their strength to the maintenance of world peace in a spirit of justice and equity.²²

²²DDF, XIII, no. 307.

The wording of the toasts was the result of an initiative by Hanotaux, who felt the need for something definite.

In France, wild acclaim greeted the Czar's first public acknowledgment of the Alliance. According to Le Temps (August 28, 1897):

The hoped-for, awaited, and necessary word has been pronounced . . . It is established, by the solemn word of the two chiefs-of-state, that the amity of France and Russia is an alliance The Czar . . . has just completed the work inaugurated by Alexander III The young prince has been able to join in the most fruitful of unions la raison d'Etat and filial piety with the acclaim of his subjects. It is all Russia . . . which contracts an alliance with the whole of France

It would be inaccurate to state that this euphoria was unanimous. Paul Cambon intimated a lower estimation of the POTHUAU toast.

In pronouncing the word Alliance, the Emperor of Russia has given to the Cabinet and especially to Hanotaux the means of successfully facing the next session [of Parliament]. That's all.²³

Most observers, nevertheless, were in general agreement that this was another proof that Russia and France remained firmly joined together to the unanimous joy of the Republic. As Le Temps stated on August 29:

The solemn proclamation of the Franco-Russian Alliance has been greeted in France with a perfectly unanimous joy. One could successively question each Frenchman without encountering . . . an unfavourable answer nor even a simple hesitation. In summary, there has not been a discordant note, and all newspapers, without distinction, have applauded the two toasts of the POTHUAU.

President Faure's stay in Russia also furnished Le Temps

²³Cambon, op. cit., pp. 419-430.

with another opportunity to give its estimation of the newly proclaimed Alliance (August 28, 1897).

. . . This Alliance . . . has . . . restored a Europe reduced to the consistency of a simple geographic expression. . . . It has given world peace the best of guarantees by bringing to bear a counter-weight to the predominance of a single will [i. e., Germany] An era has closed. An era has opened. The atomistic policy of isolation and egotism has been crushed. The policy of collaboration, mutual assistance and alliance has begun -- with firmness and calm, for the good of each and everyone.

Instead of the brutal tranquility of a prison imposed by German domination on a prostrate Europe, there now existed a "real peace" based on harmony of interests, respect of right, and equilibrium. This was the same editorial line as that initiated by Le Temps at the time of Kronstadt.

In a period of increasing international tension beyond "civilized" Europe, the great displays of Franco-Russian amity of 1896-1897 were a source of confidence in France. Europe, where the real issues of war and peace lay, remained secure and peaceful as a result of the Franco-Russian Alliance. The reiteration of this theme sums up the policy of Le Temps. It remained a consistently firm supporter of the Alliance in its European context. The paper's stand continued to be one of moderation which stressed the guarantee of peace through a Continental equilibrium. There was no encouragement or even any significant reference to revanche. However, as will be shown in the following chapter, even Le Temps would have difficulties in making

a case for the above policy at a time in which both a Continental League and disarmament were to be mooted. It would become increasingly evident that the specific interests of France were not being sufficiently considered by her firm and faithful ally.

CHAPTER V

DISILLUSIONMENT AND A REAFFIRMATION (1898 - 1899)

The years 1898-1899 were among the most unrewarding in the history of the Third Republic. The nation was rocked within by the Dreyfus Affair. Externally, France faced Great Britain at Fashoda in the great showdown for the Nile basin and suffered the humiliation of being forced to retract. Le Temps (December 31, 1898) gave the following assessment of 1898, an estimation which could be easily applied to the next year as well:

This year of 1898 will no longer be [merely] the année terrible, but rightly the année triste in the history of our third Republic It will leave us only with memories of humiliation and pain. It departs [from us] empty of real results [and] useful actions, having proved to us nothing but the feeling of our impotence.

In this period of distress, there was little consolation to be derived from the Russian alliance. Displays of Franco-Russian solidarity were absent. Rather, the tie with Russia seemed once more to be forcing France into projects of dubious value. In consequence, a change in the position of Le Temps can be discerned. For the first time on matters directly related to the Alliance, the paper did not discuss Russian policies in terms of fulsome concurrence. Open criticism was avoided, but little doubt was left in the reader's mind

that a divergency existed between French and Russian interests.

As already indicated, Le Temps had adhered to a consistent line concerning the Russian alliance. The combination was taken to be the best guarantee of peace through the restoration of an equilibrium of forces on the Continent and preventing the hegemony of the German Empire. Now, during 1898-1899, Russia apparently envisaged other alternatives in the preservation of Continental peace which were not in accordance with French needs as interpreted by Le Temps. In the first place, at the encouragement of the German emperor, some Russian support was given to the formation of a coalition of the Continental European Powers directed against Great Britain. Secondly, the Russians created a great commotion in the summer of 1898 by proposing an international conference which would consider the limitation or reduction of armaments. No French government could give real support to either project if it wished to avoid political suicide. Thus, Franco-Russian relations entered a period of disillusionment and distrust. Something of the old confidence was restored by Foreign Minister Delcassé's visit to Russia in August 1899. Nevertheless, this was not a display of the nature of Kronstadt or Toulon. In any event, coming at the height of a French internal crisis, the visit provoked as much suspicion as relief. It was now clear that there was a difference of policies between the two partners.

A Continental League

The possibility of an alliance of the Continental Powers

directed against Great Britain and the United States was aired at various times between 1896 and 1899. The initiative came largely from the German emperor. A certain degree of approval was accorded to the scheme in some Russian circles and even by a few individuals in France.¹ In the end, nevertheless, the idea of a Continental combination proved to be without practical hope of achievement. Despite the obvious benefit of concerted action against Great Britain in the imperial sphere, considerable reluctance or opposition prevailed against any formalization of such ad hoc co-operation as already existed. A formal engagement, the French feared, would inevitably be made applicable to Europe itself. Such a development would result in a return to German preponderance. In any event, Alsace-Lorraine constituted an insurmountable obstacle to intimate Franco-German relations in European affairs.

A practical demonstration of the value of a coalition of Russia, France and Germany had been already given in April 1895 with the Far Eastern Triplice. Japan had been pressured into relinquishing a portion of the gains made in its successful war against China. Some saw a further development of the above co-operation in the Kiel Visit of June 1895. However, the participation of France, as already indicated, did not imply better Franco-German relations. It had taken place only as a result of Russian insistence.

¹ A detailed discussion of the various projects for a Continental League during this period may be found in Langer, op. cit., pp. 213-599. See also Renouvin, op. cit., pp. 195-202.

Developments in South Africa furnished the next opportunity for discussion of a Continental coalition. In the aftermath of the Jameson Raid of January 1896, European resentment against British activities in South Africa was nearly unanimous. Kaiser Wilhelm's "Kruger Telegram" was only the most ostentatious display of this sentiment. As a result of this Continental anglophobia, the desirability of a concert of the European Powers with the object of preventing future "provocations" by Britain was openly discussed. The French reaction was as follows. A coalition might be considered theoretically desirable in view of common hostility to Great Britain, but this proposition could rest only in the realm of speculation as long as the subject of Alsace-Lorraine remained between France and Germany.² Le Temps expressed a similar position. It denounced the Jameson Raid in strong terms as ". . . an expedition of filibusters, . . . an act of piracy on land, [and] . . . international brigandage" (January 3, 1896). On the other hand, the paper was opposed to any thought of a formal European concert against the British (January 6, 1896):

Opinion in France is in no way anxious to either humiliate a nation [i.e. Britain] . . . or to fall in step behind the German emperor. [Nor does it seek] to go beyond the line of our national policy or enter with enthusiasm into combinations [which are] artificial and against nature.

This view was consistently maintained by the paper in comment on the subject.

In the summer of 1897 the project of a Continental coalition

²DDF, XII, no. 302. See also nos. 285 and 292.

was once more brought up during the German emperor's visit to St. Petersburg. The Kaiser's proposals of a continental union against the United States were enthusiastically received by Nicholas II and part of his entourage.³ In the end, this attempt proved premature, for the German Foreign Office did not support the Kaiser's initiative. As a result, a proposal for a Russo-German Alliance by the Russian Chief-of-Staff was rejected by Berlin in September 1897.⁴ It is interesting to note that this affair was progressing at a time when the French press was engaged in unrestrained jubilation over the POTHUAU toasts.

Sufficiently serious and open discussion of a Continental coalition occurred during 1898-1899 that Le Temps took occasion to denounce the prospect. On May 15, 1898 it warned of the German tradition of seeking good relations with St. Petersburg:

German policy is neither an affair of sentiment nor subject to sudden changes. Up to now the cultivation of good relations with the neighboring Russian Empire has been one of the fixed objects of Germanic diplomacy. Prince Bismarck formulated axioms on this point which Emperor William has not thought of rescinding in practice.

Le Temps stated that there was little advantage for Russia in responding to such a policy, for it would only mark a return to the old condition of dependence on the Triple Alliance.

While France was involved in the Fashoda Crisis, it was suggested in some quarters that this might be the spur to encourage the

³ Langer, op. cit., pp. 446-447.

⁴ Ibid.

country into an arrangement with Germany. Reports of French diplomatists throughout the winter of 1898-1899 indicated that such a course was being mentioned in some sections of the Russian press and Imperial Court.⁵ The French Government took pains to counter the effects of such suggestions. Arguments against French participation in a Continental League were presented to the Czar himself by the French ambassador during an audience granted on January 18, 1899.⁶ The Czar indicated that he understood the reluctance of his ally and that the present time was inopportune for such a combination.

Le Temps made its position clear toward a continental coalition on March 2, 1899. The daily used the opportunity of an interview granted to La Liberté by Prince Radziwill, the Kaiser's extraordinary envoy at the funeral of President Faure. The Prince had urged the formation of a "holy league" of the European Powers directed against the United States and Great Britain. This proposal was condemned by Le Temps.

To orient one's policy along the line of a coalition of Continental Europe against the two Anglo-Saxon Powers would be to descend, out of sheer wantonness, into the most gratuitous of deceptions. It would openly encourage the worst of misadventures It would be . . . the most craven of moral abdications and the most pernicious of treasons against destiny. France has not yet reached the point of abjuring the fundamental principles of her public duty

Difficulties with the British might exist, but these were not worth an alliance with Germany. This editorial was Le Temps' strongest

⁵ See DDF, XIV, nos. 505 and 568.

⁶ DDF, XV, no. 26.

statement on the subject. The paper, in agreement with the Government, was not prepared to envisage an alliance of any sort with Germany. Given an occasion of provocation, it did not hesitate to denounce the notion. Such a stand was at variance with that expressed openly in many Russian circles favouring closer ties with Germany. This could not go unnoticed by astute observers.

Reaction to the Peace Manifesto of 1898

On August 24, 1898 diplomatic circles were stunned by the presentation of a circular note by the Russian Foreign Minister to the representatives of the Powers in St. Petersburg. Count Muraviev's note proposed nothing less than an international conference to consider the securing of peace through methods other than conflict and parity of armaments.

In the conviction that this exalted goal answers both the most essential interest and the legitimate wishes of all Powers, the Imperial Government believes that the present moment would be very favourable to the search, by means of international discussion, for the most efficacious methods of assuring to all peoples the benefits of a real and lasting peace, and to place, above all, a limit to the progressive development of present armaments.⁷

The circular concluded by making mention of the ruinous financial burden imposed by the armaments race and the increasingly horrifying applications of modern science to the art of war. The note came as a complete surprise. There had been no prior consultation with any other government. Only as a courtesy did the French ambassador

⁷DDF, XIV, no. 304.

receive a copy of the note a short time before its presentation.⁸ This was hardly the procedure for gaining the support of the French for what was immediately considered a most dubious project.

It was originally assumed that the origins of the note lay solely in the young Czar's alleged love for peace. In fact, this played only a minor role, for the note was based on some definite aspirations.⁹ The current models of the Russian army's field artillery were obsolete compared to those of Austria-Hungary and Germany. As a consequence, the Russian Chief-of-Staff proposed that the Foreign Ministry attempt to secure a moratorium on further development. If successful, a substantial financial saving would be gained on both sides. Count Witte, the Minister of Finance, was favourable to the scheme on account of his reluctance to authorize the expenditure of funds for the development of a new model of artillery. Muraviev was also in favour, influenced toward this point of view by the tense situation in the Far East. He also expanded the project to a full scale international conference. With the approval of the Czar, the Peace Note was presented to a startled world.

Official French reaction was initially one of shock, followed by a definite lack of enthusiasm. The first few days following the presentation of the note were spent by Delcassé asking for more information.¹⁰ Replies, especially those from the military attachés, dwelt

⁸DDF, XIV, no. 303.

⁹The details of the origins of the note and the subsequent international conference may be found in Thomas K. Ford, "The Genesis of the First Hague Peace Conference, "Political Science Quarterly, LI, No. 3 (Sept., 1936), 354-382. See also Langer, op. cit., pp. 582-592.

¹⁰DDF, XIV, nos. 306, 308, 309, 310 and 311.

on the practical difficulties of implementing the ideal of disarmament. A good summary of the official French attitude was given by Paul Cambon on August 31, 1898.¹¹ No Power, he stated, would reject the proposals of the Russians out-of-hand, but if the conference did take place, there would be scant likelihood of any practical results.

The major French concern was that an international peace conference might arrive at a general reaffirmation of the status quo as fixed by the Treaty of Frankfurt of 1871. No French government could be expected to agree openly with such a conclusion. Consequently, some of Paris' initial moves were to inform the Russians of France's special position concerning any formal recognition of the perpetuation of the status quo. The Russians hastened to set the mind of their ally at rest. Muraviev informed the French ambassador on September 1 that:

The Emperor does not wish any political question to be raised in the projected conference. He will not permit it, by reason of the special considerations which touch upon France.¹²

Ostensibly satisfied with this pledge, the French Government declared its adherence to the Russian note on September 3, 1898.¹³

Like the Government, Le Temps greeted the Russian note without great enthusiasm. Its initial comment (August 30, 1898) sought an explanation for the action " . . . of the only autocratic government which exists in Christian Europe." In the paper's opinion, there was

¹¹DDF, XIV, no. 314.

¹³DDF, XIV, no. 320.

¹²DDF, XIV, no. 317.

nothing unusual in the note emanating from Russia, for " . . . the tradition within authoritarian States is precisely that of taking the initiative for reforms in certain domains." It was suggested that autocratic Russia wished to prove that it could be liberal in the international sphere if not in the domestic. Much was also made of the young Czar's supposed love for peace. Discussing the attitude of France, Le Temps then stated that:

It would be impossible for France -- daughter of the Revolution, [and] faithful to the ideals of reason, justice and humanity -- . . . not to acclaim the Imperial manifesto with a great sigh of joy and emotion.

Nevertheless, this should be considered as nothing more than polite window-dressing, for the daily then brought up what it considered to be the political realities of the Europe of 1898:

As long as the scandal of this violation of right [of 1870-71] has not been erased, the descendants of the men of 1789 must not subscribe to the application of the principles invoked by Count Muraviev . . . [This will be possible only] after having safeguarded . . . the very existence of France [and after having secured] reparation of the past and redressment of the future.

On September 1, 1898 the paper made its view clearer concerning the policy France ought to adopt:

France owes it to her amity for Russia, . . . to herself, her past, [and] her traditions to do nothing by way of reducing the import of this resounding manifestation. [However], under present conditions, it is to be believed that it will be difficult, not to say impossible, to realise immediately the ideal placed before Christianity at this fin de siècle by Czar Nicholas.

Due to the unbearable humiliations of 1870-71, France could claim to hold a special status which could not be altered until rendered justice. Nothing would be done to hinder the peace campaign, but neither would

any action be taken to secure its practical application. Muraviev's note expressed sentiments which all acknowledged, but which none were prepared to admit as being practicable in the real world.

A further burst of activity came with the presentation of a second circular note by Muraviev on January 11, 1899.¹⁴ This was a request for general opinions from the Powers and an agenda of items to be discussed. These included means of halting the increasing stock-piling of arms, ways of preventing armed conflict by peaceful settlement, and renovation of the laws of war. The choice of a site for the conference was determined on February 10, 1899 as The Hague.¹⁵

Le Temps gave its advice on January 18, 1899. This was but a reiteration of what had been said earlier.

For France, neither her traditions nor her relations with Russia permits any hesitation. It is necessary, however, that she prepare herself to go to the conference with open eyes. Acceptance of the Czar's invitation does not in any way imply adhesion to a programme of such complexity The essential [point] is not to be lacking in any courtesy toward Russia and especially not to betray the humanitarian ideals of our own past. That done, we must retain our freedom of action.

There was thus little enthusiasm for the Russian suggestions. Participation in the proposed international conference was required as a

¹⁴DDF, XV, no. 12.

¹⁵DDF, XV, no. 74. French reaction to Muraviev's rather concrete proposals respecting the laws of war and the introduction of new weapons was somewhat hostile and sceptical. The French military objected particularly to proposals for the banning of certain weapons -- e.g. submarines. France was a pioneer in the military application of these craft. See DDF, XV, no. 69.

matter of form. The attitude expressed by Le Temps may be summed up as follows: France was peaceful and, therefore, did not need to take any initiative in showing this fact to the rest of the world. She could hold herself aloof in the coming conference as befitted a Power with a much higher moral level than the ruthless German Empire and its Triple Alliance. The comments made by the daily concerning the proposed conference also indicated a certain impatience with the Russians for proposing such a noble but impractical scheme.

Le Temps need not have advised the Government to remain cautious. Delcassé's acceptance of the projected Hague Conference was non-committal. It stressed the condition upon which French participation depended -- absolutely no implication of any permanency being attached to the status quo of 1871.¹⁶ This was repeated in the instructions given to the Republic's delegates at the Hague.¹⁷ They were to be most solicitous to the sensibilities of their Russian colleagues. They were not to attempt any sabotage of the discussions but were not to take any initiatives. Above all, they were to ensure that there was no limitation on French interests.

The First Hague Peace Conference sat from May 18 to July 29, 1899. Results were minor. The rules of warfare were given further regularization. There was some discussion concerning a permanent court of arbitration for minor issues. Above all, the conference set the precedent for future meetings. In total, the affair was of little

¹⁶DDF, XV, no. 75

¹⁷DDF, XV, no. 175.

contemporary political importance. As Le Temps concluded on August 2, 1899: "it must be confessed that it has been a spectacle of little encouragement and that all the fine phrases of diplomatic eloquence will change nothing." It was much easier to make a case for the preservation of world peace on the basis of an equilibrium of forces rather than upon some general consensus of good will. Although lacking in practical effect, it may be concluded that the Peace Manifesto, and its aftermath, were sufficient to raise doubts concerning Russia's dependability. Above all, the episode showed that Russia envisaged methods for the maintenance of security which were not the same as those upon which the Alliance was supposedly based.

Reaffirmation: Delcassé Visits Russia
(August 4-9, 1899)

The Franco-Russian Alliance received a reaffirmation as a result of Delcassé's visit to St. Petersburg in August 1899. Since the Foreign Minister's trip took place at the height of the French internal crisis attending the Dreyfus Affair, considerable speculation was raised as to its object. Le Temps directed its efforts toward dispelling such speculations. In the first place, such visits were said to be perfectly normal (August 6, 1899). "A month hardly passes in which foreign ministers of different countries do not meet each other." It was not uncommon for statesmen to meet in order to benefit from personal contacts.

This procedure, which is judged preferable for private interests, is equally so for public business. It is excellent

that direct contacts between ministers increase more and more. The conduct of international affairs will be more prompt, more cordial, and chances for the maintenance of peace will be augmented as a result.

Le Temps concluded by denouncing those who indulged in idle speculation concerning the visit. But, it is noteworthy that no attempt was made to build the visit up as a great display of Franco-Russian solidarity. Instead, it was clearly acknowledged in general -- although vague in specifics -- that Delcassé's journey was directed at important adjustments in the Alliance necessitated by changed conditions. In previous years the Alliance had been subject to certain weakening trends. Delcassé thus sought to close what was considered an important gap in the Alliance.¹⁸ Due to the restriction of the Alliance's duration to that of the Triple Alliance, there was fear over what would happen in the event of a collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Internal crises within the Empire made this seem imminent. It was assumed that the German portions would be gained by Germany, greatly increasing its strength. Delcassé thus sought to provide for such a contingency.¹⁹ It was also hoped to initiate steps for altering the terms of the military convention.

The major result of the visit was reflected on August 9, 1899 in a secret exchange of letters between Delcassé and Muraviev which stipulated alterations in the conditions of the alliance.²⁰ Thus the main

¹⁸The most recent account of Delcassé's visit to Russia appears in Christopher Andrew, "German World Policy and the Reshaping of the Dual Alliance," Journal of Contemporary History, I, No. 3 (July 1966), 137-151.

¹⁹DDF, XV, no. 115.

²⁰See DDF, XV, nos. 251 and 252.

object of the alliance for both parties was now defined as " . . . the maintenance of the general peace and equilibrium between European forces." The earlier instrument of August 1891 had been directed only at the maintenance of peace.²¹ No time limit was envisaged in the altered Alliance, thus dealing with the contingency of a collapse of Austria-Hungary. This alteration in the Alliance was followed by a secret exchange of protocols between the Russian and French General Staffs in July 1900 and February 1901. These involved changes in the scheme of French mobilization and provided for military co-operation against Great Britain. In short, the engagements of the Alliance were given more precise and extensive definition.

Apart from seeking to dispel certain exaggerated speculations, Le Temps also sought to give its own estimation of the purpose of Delcassé's sudden journey. The first attempt appeared on August 6, 1899.

. . . Since the conclusion of the Franco-Russian Alliance, the political situation has been transformed in nearly all parts of the world. A wise and pacific diplomacy must define and envisage new problems with increasing clarity.

Despite the fact that Le Temps was probably not aware of the content of Delcassé's conversations with the Russians, or their outcome, the daily's statement was, in fact, a reasonable hint as to what took place. Indeed, Le Temps' assessment had more substance than that given by Delcassé in an interview with the paper's special correspondent in St. Petersburg. The Foreign Minister was quoted as saying (August 9, 1899):

²¹ DDF, VIII, nos. 514 and 517. Supra, pp. 30-31. The broadening of the alliance came from Russian acceptance of the word "equilibrium."

Count Muraviev and I did not make even the least allusion to the present questions of our internal politics The Franco-Russian union, far from being slackened, is tighter than ever Relations between France and Russia . . . have never been more direct, cordial, intimate [and] trusting! Such is the truth -- strict, complete, absolute.

Above all, Delcassé denounced irresponsible rumour and speculation about such weighty matters. The conclusion to be drawn was that the Alliance was as solid as ever. Le Temps was not quite as optimistic, but it did not develop this theme further.

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Franco-Russian relations had undergone a period of trial during 1898-1899. No great displays of solidarity took place to counter the strain. Both the Continental League and serious application of the ideals of the Peace Manifesto were unpalatable to France. Delcassé's trip to Russia did little to diminish the degree of scepticism which now existed in some quarters concerning the value of the Alliance. Le Temps took notice of this in commenting on a speech by Delcassé in the Senate on March 17, 1900. The Foreign Minister had begun with a conventional statement, the essence of which had been made many times in the past:

He affirmed that the Franco-Russian Alliance had not suffered the least shock, that it was tighter than ever, that agreement had never been more cordial, complete [and] active.

Notice was then taken of an important reservation which had been made in the speech. In the words of Delcassé:

However, this precious entente does not modify the general conditions of international politics. . . . France has no longer the right to throw herself generously . . . into the service of even the most legitimate causes. She is, above all, responsible to herself, [and] her vital interests.

Le Temps concluded that this must have been a reference to certain undisclosed adventures into which the Russians had attempted to lead France. These could not have been in the Republic's best interests. The French Government, having a responsibility above all else to itself, had to follow a policy which might lie outside all the ramifications of the Alliance. The combination was aimed at a European equilibrium of forces. France was under no obligation to involve herself in anything more. Such a view was in marked contrast to the older line of an unbreakable union of Franco-Russian interests and devotion.

CHAPTER VI

LE TEMPS AND FRANCO-RUSSIAN IMPERIAL CO-OPERATION: AN OVERVIEW (1891-1899)

Although a number of brief references to the world beyond Europe have already been made, this thesis has up to now been primarily concerned with Le Temps' treatment of the Franco-Russian entente (or, alliance) as a development of Continental Great Power politics. However, the entente had an additional potential. The last decade of the Nineteenth Century was a time of rampant imperialist expansion. France reaped great benefits in Europe; was it not to be anticipated that similar co-operation would produce equally great rewards in the imperial field? It is with this question that this chapter deals. The matter of the entente in the imperial sphere is given a separate chapter because the author is of the opinion that it can be treated separately from the entente in Europe.

It was natural to expect that the Franco-Russian entente would not remain restricted to Europe. Both Powers had interests and aspirations in other parts of the globe. The rapprochement thus implied

possible co-operation for mutual benefit on a wider sphere. Nevertheless, from the beginning a divergency existed between the two partners on the interpretation of a prospective wider application of their tie. The French envisaged the entente primarily as a European arrangement directed against Germany and the Triple Alliance. As such, it formed the cornerstone of the Republic's Continental security. Co-operation with Russia outside Europe was another matter. The French Government viewed with concern the possibility of becoming embroiled in a war as a result of support for Russia in some peripheral area. Such a problem was recognised at an early date. During the period of initial negotiations, Alexandre Ribot, the Foreign Minister, noted on August 6, 1891 that "Russia is evidently preoccupied with eventually assuring herself of our aid, even against England, . . . which is considered . . . already bound to the Triple Alliance."¹ The attitude of the French Government toward Russian designs was reflected five days later:

If we are tightening our entente with Russia, it is not for the purpose of allowing ourselves to become engaged in a war on account of Afghanistan or even the Balkans. We must not for an instant lose sight of the war which we will have to endure against Germany, and which will decide the fate of Europe for a long time.²

For this reason, the French Government was emphatic in its insistence on the need for a military convention to supplement the political entente which would clearly define its commitment as being aimed against the

¹DDF, VIII, no. 460.

²DDF, VIII, no. 485.

Triple Alliance alone. Le Temps, somewhat hesitantly, also recognised the existence of the problem. Commenting on Anglo-Russian tensions in Central Asia, the daily stated (July 11, 1892):

One is only too correct in fearing that some morning -- for the most futile objectives, on account of a quarrel among half-naked nomads -- the great conflagration will be ignited on the Pamirs which will bring ruin to the whole of Europe.

The paper's main interest in the Russian Alliance was its application to Europe. There was little enthusiasm for involvement in a war between Russia and Great Britain. For this reason, the paper was to be a firm supporter of the Concert of Europe in the world sphere as a means of minimizing difficulties. Russia, on the other hand, had always envisaged a political arrangement with France as possessing a world-wide application. Reluctant in giving the entente a purely anti-German direction, the Russian Government had sought to make the terms of the understanding as vague as possible -- applicable equally against Britain, Austria-Hungary, or Germany. The long delays attending the conclusion of the military convention were, in part, a sign of Russian hesitancy.

In the end, France did become involved in co-operation with Russia in a global sphere -- Africa, the Near East, and the Far East. This was done not only for the sake of the entente, but also from the desire for diplomatic support in areas of France's own interest. The predominating motive depended on the situation. Alliance solidarity constituted the main reason for French support of Russia in the Near East, while in Africa and Egypt the desire for diplomatic support came

first. In the Far East, motives were mixed.

Although interested in the entente primarily as it applied to Europe, Le Temps was prepared to consider the tie with Russia as a means of ensuring a greater voice for France in world politics. During the euphoria surrounding the Kronstadt Visit, the paper (September 13, 1891) stated that "at the present time, the era of monologues is passed, that of dialogues has been restored." The position of France had to be now considered by the Great Powers on all issues. On the first anniversary of the Toulon Visit, Le Temps (October 30, 1894) dwelt in glowing terms on an unbreakable union of Franco-Russian interests in every part of the globe.

The interests of France and Russia are so identical [that] . . . they could not avoid coming to an agreement This is true not only in Europe, but also in every part of the world: on the Vistula and the Rhine, on the Bosphorus and the Suez Canal, in darkest Africa as in the farthest reaches of Asia, in the Mediterranean Basin and on the distant shores washed by the waves of the Pacific Ocean.

The Alliance was also considered to have resulted in the reaping of considerable imperial benefits -- indirectly through ensuring a tranquil European continent, and directly through mutual co-operation in support of each other's interest. According to Le Temps on August 21, 1901:

Assisted by one another in Europe, strengthened by their Alliance, France and Russia each find themselves freer to turn their internal energies toward the world, the vast world! It is thanks to the Alliance that there has been produced the magnificent flowering of French influence in Africa and Russian influence in Asia This policy has been possible because their principal fields of action remain distinct. They have been able to co-operate without impeding or embarrassing each other.

The paper was quite right in its assessment of the indirect benefits of the Alliance to the cause of French imperialism. With its European security assured, the Republic was better able to direct attention away from the German frontier to colonial adventures. After 1891, the pace of advance in Madagascar, Africa and Indo-China was stepped-up. In contrast to an earlier period, these adventures enjoyed considerable popularity in France. The cries of "Ferry-Tonkin" were now a thing of the past. In the first decade of the Russian Alliance, France virtually completed the acquisition of her colonial empire.

If indirect benefits from the Alliance proved substantial, relatively little was gained from direct co-operation with Russia. Indeed, such a course presented such difficulties that some feared for the life of the Alliance itself. Hanotaux, writing prior to Nicholas II's visit of October 1896, intimated that "the stumbling block of the Franco-Russian Alliance has always been the Eastern Question."³ He considered the revival of good Franco-Russian relations as something of a "miracle." In addition, resentment existed among French diplomatists over what they considered the detrimental effect on French interests of collusion with Russia. Paul Cambon, the ambassador in Constantinople, was the most outspoken proponent of such a view. As early as July 1, 1891, he condemned Paris for selling out to Russia:

Our traditional policy at Constantinople is agreement with England and opposition to Russian encroachments; but today we are cold toward the English and work with the Russians in perfect harmony.

³ Dethan, loc. cit., p. 209.

The [diplomatic] agent who sacrifices the true principles of our Eastern policy and the real interests of France in Syria to the Russian illusion will dishonour himself in the near future [Yet, the agent who] tries to maintain any independence from Russia will be accused . . . by pig-headed [experts] in Paris of lacking in patriotism and of selling his country to England.⁴

The French Government was willing to accept Russian diplomatic support in Africa and China, Indeed, this was actively solicited, but it met with an unenthusiastic response. Similar requests by Russia were accorded much the same treatment, particularly when St. Petersburg brought up the possibility of a seizure of the Straits. Paris had no desire to stand by its ally to the point of risking a genral war over the Balkans. This attitude provoked a like reaction from St. Petersburg. Neither Power was willing to support its ally vigorously in an area where its own interests were not involved to the same extent. For this reason, direct application of the entente outside Europe proved a disappointment. In the end, each partner carried on without much concern for its ally.

The Near East

Attention to the perennial problem of the decaying Ottoman Empire was largely focused between 1891 and 1899 on two issues -- the Armenian persecutions and the Cretan insurrection. These seemed to herald the long-expected collapse of the Empire and raised a host of questions, the solution of which the diplomatists found difficult to

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Cambon, op. cit., p. 344.

contemplate.⁵ Other problems continued -- the Russo-Bulgar feud and disputes relating to the Holy Places -- but their declining seriousness made them increasingly irrelevant.

French policy in the Near East was based on the nation's considerable financial stake in the Ottoman Public Debt and the ancient religious protectorate over the Sultan's Catholic subjects. The status quo was to be preserved, if at all possible, through the implementation of reforms. However, the French Government, mindful of the attitude of St. Petersburg, was unwilling to use coercion as a means of "persuading" the Sultan to undertake reforms. Rather, it was hoped diplomatic pressure alone could be exerted on the Porte through the Powers acting in concert. Isolated action by one Power alone was to be prevented.⁶

Le Temps took a stand favouring the preservation of the Ottoman Empire. It supported the concept of a Concert of the Powers

⁵ An excellent survey of the Eastern Question is given by Anderson, op. cit., pp. 251-263. Encyclopaedic, though dated, coverage is provided by Langer, op. cit., pp. 145-166, 195-212, 303-384.

⁶ French policy was reflected in the instructions sent to the ambassador in Constantinople following the conclusion of the entente with Russia. According to a letter from the Foreign Minister on December 6, 1891" . . . neither France nor Russia has any intention of modifying the status quo in the East It would be very important for the ambassadors of Russia and France to receive instructions permitting them to speak to the Sultan in identical terms "(DDF, IX, no. 91). The preservation of Turkey was considered the best guarantee of peace in the Near East.

in the Near East, with the friendship between France and Russia serving as a spur to its development. The paper did not advocate any action beyond diplomatic pressure except through the Concert.

The long sufferings of the Sultan's Armenian subjects reached a high point between 1894 and 1896. The development of political consciousness among the Armenians founds its expression in unrest and terrorism. Turkish reaction took the form of widespread massacres. These outrages produced a violent anti-Turk agitation in Great Britain and, to a lesser extent, in France. Demands by British public opinion for an investigation and imposition of reforms had to be met, to a certain degree, by the Government in London. Thus, there appeared a distinct possibility of unilateral British coercion of the Turks. Paris was able to keep French pro-Armenian agitation sufficiently in check and thus avoid embarrassment to Russia.

The Russian attitude toward the Armenians was distinctly unfavourable. As the Armenians constituted an oppressed minority in the Russian Caucasus, any special status accorded to them in Turkey would be dangerous to Russian interests. Russia was also unprepared to use coercion on the Porte for fear that such action might hasten the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, a prospect viewed with dread in most quarters. In particular, the Russian Government feared any change in the status quo which might deny them future possession of the Straits. Under the circumstances, Russian policy was aimed at preserving the Ottoman Empire. St. Petersburg therefore advocated concerted

diplomatic action by the three most interested Powers -- Russia, France and Britain. Such an approach formed the most efficacious means of thwarting isolated British action. France, for the sake of the entente was obligated to follow the Russian lead.⁷ Paris' official interest in Armenia was sufficiently limited to justify not taking any initiative.⁸ Specific action by France was early made dependent on the course plotted by Russia.⁹ Thus, the works of the "Near Eastern Triplice" came to be noted more for restraining Great Britain than securing any amelioration of the Armenians' sorry plight.

Le Temps faithfully supported the Quai d'Orsay's policies in the Armenian Affair. Its first significant comment on the massacres appeared on December 6, 1894. Events in Armenia were said to be the legitimate concern of the Great Powers, but a strong warning was issued

⁷The most complete account of French policy relating to Armenia, using recently available material, appears in Iiams, op. cit., pp. 121-140. Keith Eubank, Paul Cambon: Master Diplomatist (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), pp. 41-51 discusses the key role played by the French ambassador at Constantinople during the massacres. See also A. O. Sarkissian, "Concert Diplomacy and the Armenians, 1890-1897," Studies in Diplomatic History and Historiography in Honour of George Peabody Gooch, ed. A.O. Sarkissian, (London: Longman's, Green and Co., 1961), pp. 48-75.

⁸DDF, XI, no. 292.

⁹DDF, XI, no. 308. Cambon was continually at odds with his Government over this policy, for he wished France to play a more active role in the Near East. His views were largely ignored by Hanotaux.

against unilateral action:

Nothing would be more distressing, from all points of view -- for the Porte, the Armenians themselves, [and] for the harmony of the Powers -- than isolated action by any one State

Once the "Near Eastern Triplice" came into effect, Le Temps' comments developed the theme of the European Concert. On May 21, 1895 the daily noted its pleasure at the revival of Great Power co-operation in a situation menacing to all. ". . . The European Concert, the principle of the community of action in view of common interests, has once more given proof of its vitality and efficacy." The paper also expressed the hope that this application of the Concert would be remembered in the future, for new complex situations might arise in which it could be used with profit. One such area, of particular interest to France in which the Concert might come into play was Egypt. According to the same issue of the paper:

When today one pronounces these words . . . "European Concert", the echo already replies: Far East and Armenia! Who knows if, sooner or later, . . . the word Egypt . . . will not be added to this litany, and if it is for Europe, acting as such, to peacefully resolve this mortal imbroglio?

This latter hope was not to be met -- Egypt remained firmly within the British sphere. Le Temps pursued its basic line of support for the Concert -- interspaced with appeals for calm -- throughout the agitation over the plight of the Armenians. This stand was anti-British insofar as it opposed unilateral coercive action against the Porte. Franco-Russian friendship was vaguely considered as the basis of the Concert. Beyond this, nothing was said concerning the joint role of the two allies

in the problem. Above all, there was no evidence of information leakage to the daily concerning Russian requests for French support in the event that armed seizure of the Straits was deemed necessary to forestall a British occupation of Constantinople.¹⁰

Difficulties in Armenia were paralleled by disturbances on the island of Crete, where, from January 1896, the Greek Christian majority were engaged in an insurrection against the Turkish regime. The rebels' aim was union with Greece. The weak government in Athens was under increasing pressure from ultra-nationalists to support the cause of the insurgents. The outcome was the militarily disastrous Greco-Turkish War of April-May 1897. If the Great Powers had not considered Crete unworthy the risk of a general war, the island's difficulties would have been an ideal opportunity for meddling. Instead, the Powers acted in concert to preserve a figment of the status quo by persuading the Sultan to institute reforms amounting to Cretan autonomy and pressuring Athens not to intervene. Eventually the situation required international military action and the establishment of a provisional regime on the island under Admirals representing the Great Powers. Throughout, Russia was a firm advocate of the Concert, France following in her wake.

¹⁰ Russian plans for seizure of the Straits and French reaction are discussed in Anderson, op. cit., pp. 256-258. Needless to say, the French Government rejected the notion of becoming involved in a European war over the Straits.

Once again, Le Temps strongly supported such an approach. The paper urged energetic action on the part of the Concert in dealing with the situation. A leading role was assigned to France and Russia. According to an editorial on January 3, 1897:

As elsewhere . . . France and Russia march hand in hand at Constantinople These two Powers . . . think only of bringing about the most perfect understanding among the other cabinets and of finally harmonizing the instrumentation of this famous European Concert.

Only France and Russia were held to be firmly enough united to act as the basis for all Great Power action on Crete. This line was continued throughout the tortuous developments of the Cretan situation. In the end (February 9, 1898), the daily concluded that the Franco-Russian Alliance had enabled France to play a great and honourable role in the Eastern Question, which was in no way compromising to the Republic's dignity.

Africa and Egypt

The years following the conclusion of the Franco-Russian entente saw the further spread of French influence in Africa. With the exception of Morocco, the Republic completed the acquisition of its African empire by 1900. Assurance of security on the Continent through the Russian Alliance enabled France to adopt a more confident stand against her main imperial rival, Great Britain. The indirect value of the entente was thus great. On the other hand, little was gained from direct co-operation with Russia. Russian interests in Africa were small. St. Petersburg had little opportunity and less

inclination to support French ambitions there. Aid remained limited to feeble diplomatic co-operation -- for example, the Russian Government made a weak protest against the abortive Anglo-Congolese Treaty of 1894.¹¹ A joint policy was followed to a certain extent only in Abyssinia, the sole area in Africa where Russia had a vague imperial interest.¹² Due to the lack of any really effective co-operation in Africa, no speculation of collaboration appeared in the pages of Le Temps.

Egypt formed the most feasible object of Franco-Russian collaboration in Africa. The country formed the main source of Anglo-French tension as a result of persistent French efforts to pressure Britain into terminating the military occupation which had been "temporarily" undertaken in 1882. Every possible opportunity was used by the French to annoy or frustrate the work of the British authorities in Egypt. Russian collaboration in this task was eagerly sought. Disappointingly, no great enthusiasm was displayed by St. Petersburg. Writing on January 27, 1893 the French ambassador to Russia observed that:

. . . Russia, despite the powerful influence that she could exercise on English policy in Egypt if she wished, is generally

¹¹DDF, XI, nos. 122 and 143.

¹²The subject of Franco-Russian co-operation in Africa was brought up on several occasions -- e. g., during the Czar's French visit of October 1896. See Gabriel Hanotaux, "Carnets -- Le Tsar Nicolas II à Paris," loc. cit., pp. 208-210. Russian curiosity in Abyssinia was derived from religious interest and the presence of Russian adventurers active in Addis Ababa.

inclined toward disinteresting herself in this question. We have had proof of this many times. The Russian Government does not wish to abandon us; . . . but it will not take any initiative Its constant preoccupation is to avoid any overly direct and active interference.¹³

The Quai d'Orsay eventually conceded that little could be expected from Russia in the Egyptian Question.

Inseparably linked to the Egyptian Question was that of the Sudan and Upper Nile.¹⁴ Since the death of General Gordon in 1885 during the Mahdi's successful revolt, the area constituted a vast no-man's-land open to the conquest of some imperial power. The most likely candidates seemed to be Great Britain or France. The leaders of the British Government, over-estimating Mahdist strength, were reluctant to attempt the conquest until absolutely necessary. The French colonial party, on the other hand, saw in the Sudan a further means of exerting pressure on the British position in Egypt if French forces were able to secure a foothold on the Upper Nile. After numerous delays, a certain Captain Marchand received instructions on February 25, 1896 to proceed from the French Congo with a military force and occupy Fashoda on the Upper Nile.

¹³DDF, IX, no. 142.

¹⁴Useful recent accounts of the Sudan Question may be found in J. A. S. Grenville, Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy: The Close of the Nineteenth Century (London: The Athlone Press of the University of London, 1964), pp. 97-126, 218-234, and Pierre Renouvin, Les origines de l'expédition de Fachoda, " Revue historique, CC(1948), pp. 180-197. See also G. N. Sanderson, England, Europe and the Upper Nile, 1882-1899 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1965). The whole range of British policy in this area is examined by C. J. Lowe, Salisbury and the Mediterranean, 1886-1896 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965).

Shortly after this decision, unconnected developments forced the hesitant British Government into steps leading to the conquest of the Sudan. In the aftermath of their miserable defeat at the hands of the Abyssinians and Sudanese at Adowa in early March 1896, the Italians made urgent appeals for aid to meet an expected attack on the frontier of their colony of Eritrea. These appeals, plus the fear of a threat to Egypt, formed the basis of a British decision to launch a military expedition along the Nile. On March 12, 1896 the Powers were informed of the decision.¹⁵

The French were naturally hostile to any action which would strengthen the British position in Egypt. As a consequence, they took every opportunity to thwart Britain by opposing a request for use of part of the reserve fund of the Caisse de la dette to finance Egyptian military participation in the proposed expedition.¹⁶ The French Government hastened to secure Russian support which was accorded on March 31, 1896.¹⁷ Much to the pleasure of the French, Russian policy had apparently undergone a change due to apprehensions about

¹⁵DDF, XII, no. 318.

¹⁶Egyptian finances had been under international control since 1874 for the purpose of ensuring repayment of bonds held by European stockholders. A reserve fund existed which could be used for extraordinary expenditures with the approval of the six commissioners of the Caisse representing the Great Powers. The French were determined to prevent the use of these funds for operations in the Sudan. Their efforts were successful after a long legal battle but were devoid of any practical result due to Britain's decision to meet the costs of the conquest of the Sudan wholly from her own resources.

¹⁷DDF, XII, nos. 324 and 361.

the neutral status of the Suez Canal. The waterway had lately assumed a greater importance for Russia as a result of increased interest in the Far East.

Le Temps took the opportunity to note its pleasure over Russian support of the French position (April 4, 1896). " . . . In pleading the cause of justice and the general interests of Europe, France has not been alone, and has found Russia at her side" Nevertheless, the paper referred to the matter in the context of European action for the purpose of protecting European, rather than purely Franco-Russian, rights.

In the confrontation between Captain Marchand and General Kitchener at Fashoda in the last months of 1898, France faced Great Britain alone.¹⁸ Lack of Russian support and internal crisis left the French Government little choice but to admit defeat to Britain and withdraw from the Nile.¹⁹ Throughout the crisis Le Temps gave extensive coverage to developments relating to Fashoda. Although anti-British, its stand was moderate compared to that of its chauvinist

¹⁸ The Fashoda Crisis is covered in Langer, op. cit., pp. 537-580 and in Grenville, op. cit., pp. 218-234. The role of the French Foreign Minister is discussed by Albéric NeTON, Delcassé 1852-1923 (Paris: Académie diplomatique internationale, 1952), pp. 177-200.

¹⁹ A certain mystery still surrounds the official Russian position during the Fashoda Crisis. The Russian Foreign Minister, accompanied by an impressive entourage, visited Paris at the height of the crisis, but no record of his conversations with Delcassé has been found to date. Some vague suggestions of Russian readiness to support France exist. See note to DDF, XIV, no. 429.

rivals. There was no demand for war with England. Nothing was said of expected aid from Russia. Indeed, nothing was mentioned of the ally except for a few brief reports of favourable comment in the Russian press. Unlike some other French papers, Le Temps made no suggestion of dropping Russia as an ally for not coming to the aid of France at a time of peril.²⁰

The Far East

With the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War on August 1, 1894 the situation in the Far East was transformed from one of quiescence into one of great activity. It remained in this state for the next ten years.²¹ Since both France and Russia had interests in China as limitrophe Powers, mutual support was to be expected. China was also considered a sphere in which the Alliance could be made evident to the world through united action.²² The auguries for mutually profitable co-operation in the Far East were thus more auspicious than elsewhere. Nevertheless, the Far East too saw the application of a European Concert in lieu of exclusive Franco-Russian co-operation.

²⁰Cf., Langer, op. cit., pp. 565-576 who makes much of French discontent amounting almost to a willingness to draw closer to Germany in order to secure revenge against England.

²¹French policy in China during the period under review is examined in Liams, op. cit., pp. 65-74. The memoirs of the French Minister in Peking during this time are most useful and accurate. A. Gérard, Ma mission en Chine (1893-1897) (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1918).

²²Ibid., p. xxiii.

As the Sino-Japanese crisis over Korea worsened prior to the outbreak of war, Le Temps (July 20, 1894) urged co-operation by the European Powers in their approach to the current difficulties. The paper considered this necessary in order to avoid the dangers of a single Power acting in isolation. In fact, this corresponded to the view of both the Quai d'Orsay and the Pont des Chantres.²³ With the outbreak of war, the daily continued to stress the importance of the European Powers acting in concert. Here again, a leading rôle was to be played by France and Russia due to their unique position.

According to an editorial of August 19, 1894:

Our situation is . . . one of absolute clarity. France is in the south of China and Russia is in the North. One must count upon these two Powers whose interests are connected The necessity of safeguarding this national domain, as well as reciprocal sympathies, closely unites them.

No suggestions were ventured of the imperial opportunities which might accrue to France from the collapse of China. For example, Le Temps printed nothing along the line of a report by the Minister in Tokyo on August 10, 1894: " . . . I estimate that we have more to gain than to lose in the struggle which has begun, [and] that our interests ought to incline us to desiring its prolongation and even fury" ²⁴ Le Temps, on the contrary, viewed China as the new "sick man" whose care was now entrusted to the Great Powers in order to prevent the complications which would ensue from his demise.

²³ DDF, XI, no. 205.

²⁴ DDF, XI, no. 216.

Sino-Japanese peace negotiations began in March 1895 and concluded with the signature of the Treaty of Shimonoseki on April 17 which confirmed Japan's unexpected victory. The harsh Japanese terms -- particularly the cession of the Liaotung Peninsula and Port Arthur -- were long known to the European Powers. Russia took great affront at this cession, for it impinged upon her own imperialist schemes. On April 18, 1895 Le Temps, commenting on the Peace Treaty, indicated that it might be necessary for the "civilized" nations to take joint action in imposing a "just" settlement on the belligerents. In point of fact, France, at Russian insistence, had long been prepared for such a course. The motives were based on more mundane factors than the sentiments of civilization. As Hanotaux wrote on April 9, 1895:

Although France has no immediate interest in the question of the cession of southern Manchuria and Port Arthur, she places the considerations of her alliances in the first rank. Therefore, we are disposed toward supporting with all possible efficacy the views of the [Russian] Imperial Government concerning the conditions of peace between China and Japan.²⁵

The business was viewed with considerable distaste, for it involved collaboration with Germany.

On April 23, 1895 a joint public protest was made by the Ministers of Russia, France and Germany to the Japanese Government in Tokyo warning of the dangers to peace entailed in the cession of the Liaotung Peninsula. Great Britain refused to participate. Japan

²⁵DDF, XI, no. 440.

conceded on May 5, 1895, much to the relief of the French Government, which had dreaded the prospect of naval action in union with Germany to bring pressure on Japan. Le Temps (April 23, 1895) noted only that the Powers had acted in order to preserve the Oriental equilibrium. The paper also noted that, while Japan had shown itself to be the military equal of the civilized European Powers, it was now necessary to show itself their moral equal. Following this pressure on Japan, France and Russia began a relatively fruitful period of co-operation in Peking. During this period France received a full share of railway concessions and leases which were being extorted by foreign Powers. This situation was acknowledged by Le Temps on October 17, 1895. "The action of France and Russia has had as a natural consequence, the creation of a privileged situation for these two Powers"

A new phase in the Far East was initiated after the German seizure of Kiao-Chow in November 1897. In the scramble for leased ports during the winter of 1897-1898 Le Temps' position altered. It was found necessary to stress Russia's peaceful intentions in the Far East (March 16, 1898). By March 30, 1898 the daily noted with some concern that Russia's Manchurian adventures would absorb the Empire's energies for quite some time. Le Temps' observation was to prove increasingly true. Russian preoccupation with the Far East, to the detriment of her ability to play an active role in European affairs, was to end only after defeat in war with Japan.

The results of the Franco-Russian Alliance, as applied in the form of mutual support in the imperial sphere, proved disappointing to France. She made no great gains as a direct result of Russian aid. This was due largely to the persistence of each partner in considering only its own interests as supreme. Neither was willing to back up its ally in an area where its own vital interests were not involved. After the rebuff of initial approaches for support, both realised the futility of expecting much from their ally. As a result, the Alliance could be considered formidable only in Europe. Here both Powers had an equally vital interest in the maintenance of the Continental equilibrium. This is not to say that France and Russia did not work together outside Europe. However, this co-operation was accomplished through the medium of the Concert of Europe rather than by bilateral action. Le Temps recognized this development and gave its approval. Imperial gains were considered the result of France's efforts alone. Only in retrospect was a direct role attributed to the Franco-Russian Alliance.²⁶

Nevertheless, a certain note of disappointment did appear in Le Temps concerning the lack of spectacular, concrete gains by France in the imperial sphere after the conclusion of the Alliance with Russia.²⁷ This was indicated in an open letter to the paper by the

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Supra, p. 107.

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French colonial advances were considerable after 1890, but were in no way comparable to such British coups as the conquest of the Sudan.

historian Ernest Lavisse on February 15, 1898. He charged that, while big things were happening in the world, France was being left out. ". . . Germany, England or Russia have gained; but in the repartitions which are being made before our eyes, we wait for our dividend, so slow in coming, with an admirable patience." The printing of this letter would imply a certain approval on the part of Le Temps, for letters by readers were printed only rarely.

CONCLUSION

The years 1891-1899 witnessed the formation and the first alteration of the Franco-Russian Alliance. Between these dates both partners came to a fuller appreciation of what their association entailed. For France, the Alliance brought the advantage of increased security and morale as a result of the termination of the long standing condition of diplomatic isolation. At the same time, it was soon apparent that the Alliance also brought problems. Not the least of these was the danger of intimacy with Germany as a result of Russian insistence.

Throughout the history of the Third Republic, Le Temps held an important position as the newspaper of the nation's ruling elite.¹ The daily's position toward the Franco-Russian Alliance was important not only for the fact that it enjoyed a reputation as the quasi-official voice of the Republican regime. The paper also fulfilled a key function in its presentation of a framework of thought in which the Alliance could be considered by those persons who took an interest in foreign affairs. This framework may be discerned in Le Temps' consistent editorial support of close relations with Russia from the time of the Kronstadt Visit of 1891.

¹Manévy, op. cit., pp. 209-218.

The paper justified its support of the entente on the grounds that it preserved peace through the restoration of an equilibrium of forces on the European Continent. In other words, a Franco-Russian Entente constituted a check upon the dominant position of the Triple Alliance. The equilibrium furthered the cause of peace by ending its dependence on the unstable good will of a single Power. The paper never suggested that the entente be considered an instrument of revanche. Rather, its sole object was the preservation of peace.

It is noteworthy that Le Temps considered the balance of power concept to be in the French interest. This may be compared to a previous era in which France had been viewed as the principal disturber of the European balance. Since the creation of a united Germany in 1871, there was no longer any hope for the establishment of French Continental hegemony. The new Germany was now the main candidate for the attainment of this status. Consequently, France became converted to the cause of the balance of power in the hope of restraining German ascendancy.

Certain limitations on French conduct also resulted from the entente. Of particular delicacy was France's apparent dependence upon Russia to the extent of being dragged into a rapprochement with Germany at the insistence of St. Petersburg. Le Temps opposed such a development. At the same time, the paper's anti-German stand was restrained. While warning that little good could be expected from Germany, there were no expressions of violent hostility to the point of

advocating war. Indeed, the paper exhibited considerable skill in dealing with the limitations imposed by the Alliance. For example, the daily explained away the touchy subject of French participation at the opening of the Kiel Canal on Russian insistence as a necessity demanded by international good manners. Le Temps was less circumspect in its reaction to the notion of a Continental League. The prospect was simply denounced as unnatural. Another Russian project which was greeted without enthusiasm was that envisaged in the Peace Manifesto of 1898. This was eventually dismissed as utopianism of the most idealistic quality, but hardly practicable in view of political realities.

In imperial activity, Le Temps recognised the indirect value of the Alliance. With French security on the Continent made more certain, it was possible to take a more active role in imperial expansion. However, the Republic made no really significant gains as a result of direct Franco-Russian co-operation. This mostly took the form of concerted action with other Powers. Thus, on several occasions France and Russia collaborated with Great Britain and Germany. Le Temps gave its approval to the concept of concerted action by the Great Powers in the general interests of Europe. Although void of spectacular gains, this policy did tend to minimize disputes. The real significance of the Alliance thus lay in its feature of forming the keystone of French Continental security.

Le Temps was thus a consistent supporter of the Alliance, though it always insisted that the tie had to conform to French interests.

Deviations from the role of forming a defensive bloc against Germany were not appreciated. In spite of flowery statements of an unbreakable bond joining the two peoples, the daily upheld the view that France owed its primary responsibility to itself. The Alliance was intended to fit into this pattern.

The framework given by Le Temps to its readers concerning the Alliance with Russia closely resembled the policy of the French Government. It viewed the Alliance as a means of ensuring French security on the Continent; a precaution against Germany rather than an instrument for the achievement of revanche in the foreseeable future. Relations on the Continent were viewed in terms of an equilibrium. However, the confidential diplomatic transactions carried on by the Government parallel to the public life of the Alliance did not find any expression in the pages of Le Temps. For example, all aspects of the military convention remained strictly secret. Le Temps propagated a theoretical basis for the Alliance but did not divulge any secrets of Franco-Russian relations. This study has found no evidence to indicate that Le Temps' position was necessarily derived from an insight into the details of secret diplomatic discussions. This is a matter left open for future study. Still, it may be concluded that the closeness of the general policy expressed by the daily to that of the Quai d'Orsay justifies Le Temps' reputation as the voice of the French Government (at least for the period under review, 1891-1899).

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